



October 1, 2020

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
City Council Meeting
City Council Room
474 Broadway
4:00 PM

4:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

SALUTE TO FLAG

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD / 15 MINUTES

PRESENTATION(S):

CONSENT AGENDA

MAYOR'S DEPARTMENT

ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

1. Announcement: Public Safety Update

SUPERVISORS

ADJOURN



October 1, 2020

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
City Council Meeting
City Council Room
474 Broadway
4:00 PM

PRESENT: Meg Kelly, Mayor
Michele Madigan, Commissioner of Finance
John Franck, Commissioner of Accounts
Robin Dalton, Commissioner of DPS

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa Shields, Deputy Mayor
Deirdre Ladd, Deputy Commissioner, Finance
Joe O'Neill, Deputy Commissioner, DPW
Eileen Finneran, Deputy Commissioner, DPS

Vincent DeLeonardis

EXCUSED: Anthony Scirocco, Commissioner of DPW
Maire Masterson, Deputy Commissioner, Accounts

Matthew Veitch, Supervisor
Tara Gaston, Supervisor

RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

The proceedings of this meeting were taped for the benefit of the secretary. Because the minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, the minutes are not a word-for-word transcript.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kelly called the meeting to order at 4:00p.m.

Mayor Kelly asked if the public comment could be held until the end of the meeting.

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

Announcement: Public Safety Update

Commissioner Dalton stated we are here today to talk about the recent protests in Saratoga Springs. The Safety of the community and all involved is the number one priority of the Department of Public Safety. On Friday night, there was a protest by the group "All of Us" that started in Congress Park at 5:30pm, from approximately 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. they marched up and down the streets in the downtown business corridor. At this time, the Saratoga Springs Police Department began blocking traffic for safety reasons. Commissioner Dalton then played videos and apologized for the explicit language the videos contained.

Over the last 6 days, they have received hundreds of complaints from residents, businesses and people who are visiting our city with regard to the protest on Friday night. The Saratoga Springs Police Department recognizes the right to peacefully protest; however, one person's constitutional right does not supersede another's. She reiterated that fact. Several people in the group were wearing ballistic vests, carrying shields and baseball bats. The group frequently stopped outside businesses to intimidate and harass diners and pedestrians. She played another video taken on Phila Street, outside Sushi Tai Garden, about 7 p.m. Friday night. The voice in the video is Jamaica Miles the head of "All of Us". She stated that none of the diners came back that evening, this was not the only area business effected that night.

Assistant Chief Catone stated he was making this statement on behalf of the Police Department. The Saratoga Springs Police Department respects the rights of people to peacefully protest. People have the right to speak out on public property such as parks, government buildings as long as they are not blocking access to the buildings or interfering with purposes the property was designated for. The Police Department has been asked repeatedly if the protestors this summer had a permit. You don't need a permit to march in the streets, or sidewalks, as long the marchers do not obstruct vehicle or pedestrian traffic. The videos shown today and videos previously documented clearly show that pedestrian and vehicle traffic have been obstructed to the point where the safety of the protestors, pedestrians and motoring public have been compromised. The Saratoga Springs Police Department has always made itself available to work with protestors on the planning and execution of the intended protest to make sure that the needs and safety of protestors are met, as well as the needs and safety of the community at large. Despite the repeated attempts by the Police Department to reach out to the organizers of "All of Us", the group has refused to communicate with the Police Department. The Police Department will continue to make itself available to meet with groups such as "all of us" should they wish to plan a protest that meets the needs, peace and safety of all community members. Moving forward should demonstrations, protests which have not been coordinated with our department, occur, obstruct vehicular/pedestrian traffic, and compromise the peace and safety of all community members, the Police Department will ask demonstrators/protestors to remove themselves from the roadway and stop obstructing vehicular/pedestrian traffic. Demonstrators/protestors will be given the opportunity to move and if they fail to do so, the appropriate police action will take place and they may be subject to arrest.

Commissioner Dalton stated she has reached out to the group "All of Us" on numerous occasions. Commissioner Dalton went through all the dates she tried to make contact as the group asserted that no one has made contact with them. She left messages for Mr. Figorio stating she would meet with him and leaving her personal cell phone number, she did not receive a return phone call. Commissioner played a voicemail that was left on her phone by Mr. Figorio that was left in the middle of a protest. She also stated he left her a profanity-laced voicemail at about 2am.

Mayor Kelly stated she 100% backs the Public Safety Department and it is time to make some changes. This cannot continue to happen time and time again. We cannot have streets blocked there is going to be a time when someone is run over by a car. There is going to be a fight in the street and it is going to be a bad scene. This is a very important turning point, and she thanked Commissioner Dalton.

Commissioner Madigan stated that we saw in the video people saying we don't need the police. She wanted to make it clear that we do need the police for a lot of reasons. She stated she saw videos of All of Us and Black Lives Matter members calling Commissioner Dalton as well as members of our Police Department murderers, racists and white supremacist. You have the right to protest and even have the right to civil disobedience. The police department clearly articulated that you will not be able to block traffic you will be given a warning to move and if not you will likely be arrested. She stated she understands why they are protesting. She heard that people's food was spit on. She was concerned that in the video there were small children hiding behind their parents. She also has not been contacted to speak with anyone from Black Lives Matter or All of Us. She stated that people come and make demands and one of them being to defund the police. She stated we will not be defunding the police. She extended the invitation to meet with anyone who would like to discuss the police budget. She would be happy to meet and move the conversation forward. We are going to negotiate and work well together, so we can put an end to this conflict and strife in our community.

Commissioner Franck stated he has lived here most of his life. The police have showed restraint throughout the process. He believes the important thing is dialogue. Many people were upset about what happened in Louisville and he was very upset as well. He stated he is a business owner in Downtown and suffers just like many people who have businesses here. He asks that both sides work together on this.

Commissioner Dalton asked to interrupt for a moment. She stated she believes that we have made a lot of progress in terms of having conversations of race and bias in Saratoga Springs. She stated that is a separate issue that they are having with "All of Us". As she stated the half a dozen times she tried to make contact with the organization that is separate from the numerous times the Police Department has tried to contact them. She stated she cannot move the conversation along as this organization is 100% unwilling to have a conversation with her.

Commissioner Franck stated he can't change the past. He stated maybe we can move forward to work together that was his point. He stated the behavior was not great he has kids also. He also got complaints from people who were at the restaurant. He doesn't think escalating anything at this point in time makes sense either. He thinks we can make this work. He stated he knows what the police have done on their end. They have done everything they cannot to engage. They don't want to escalate this. Hopefully, we can work together, over time maybe the dialogue will work.

Commissioner Madigan stated she extends herself as a legislator. She stated her contact information email, phone number is on the City website. She would like to meet, and discuss the budget and start moving the conversation forward. What's happening now cannot be pleasant for anyone. Not for you, not for us, not for the Police. She stated we hear you that is why we are sitting here. She would like to open some real dialogue for change. We have a City to run and cannot have the traffic blocked. People are upset and the last things she wants to see is vigilantism in the city. She again extended her offer to reach out to her, and hopes people will take her up on her offer.

Commissioner Dalton said that our economy is extremely fragile right now and our restaurants are doing their best to try to hold on through the fall and winter. Our retailers are also trying to make it through the fall and winter. She said if she went out on Friday night and had the experience that those people had, she would not come back.

Mayor Kelly stated she agreed with that. She received a lot of emails about this from people saying that they will not come back until this is under control. That is just not helping our tourism, retail, restaurants downtown. It is a problem when streets are being blocked so businesses cannot do business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Kelly said the public comment period is limited to a total of 15 minutes and individuals are limited to two minutes.

Mayor Kelly opened the public comment period at 4:28 p.m.

Chad Beatty of 5 Case Street thanked the City Council for bringing this up but wished it would have happened earlier. He stated he is a business owner, a downtown diner, retail shopper and a concerned citizen. He stated he is also a strong supporter of the first amendment. But what has happened in the last couple of weeks is a perversion of the first amendment. Shutting down roads and stopping cars is not peaceful. Getting in people's faces and screaming, is not peaceful. Harassing diners is not peaceful. He stated that from the video people had bulletproof vests and baseball bats. Do you know what happens when someone is hit with a baseball bat it's not a pretty sight, and at some point, it will probably happen if we do not stop this. You want to talk bullying and intimidation that is bullying and intimidation. I hope this pushes this whole thing forward and we can have some communication. This is how thriving communities die. He stated he knows of 6 families who stated they do not go downtown at night. That means no dining, no shopping, eating or drinking. At some point, the wrong group of locals are going to come across the wrong group of protestors and it will get ugly. That is not something we want to make national news for. He hopes that the city gives

the police department the ability and back them to enforce this and that the protestors stick within those guidelines.

Alexis Figueroa of Paisley Road stated until people started complaining about restaurants, now you want to talk and have special Council meeting. Why did it take this long to have a meeting? They have been doing this since May. It's not all about defunding the police.

Gail Lasalle of 147 Woodlawn Ave thanked the police and the City for the patience they have had. She stated it did take things getting out of hand for the City to do something. There issue that need to be addressed. Only through communication and cooperation will things get done. Yelling and screaming feels good, but it doesn't do anything. It doesn't accomplish anything. Both sides need to sit down. Commissioner Dalton has said she is willing to do that. It's up to the other side if they want to sit down or just keep screaming.

Chandler of Elk Circle said talk about intimidation tactics, someone in the audience tripped her. She grew up here, worked in the hospital, and was born in the hospital. What world is she supposed to feel safe when this happens? This person took a picture of her. That is why we are out here with the Black Lives Matter movement, because of people like this.

Ed Moore of King Arthur Court stated he has lived in this city for almost 50 years and pay taxes. I'm a resident of the city long term. We are the people who support this community. All of Us is none of us. There are a lot of out of town people with an agenda that don't belong here, disrespecting and violating people while they are eating downtown and spitting in their food. For the record, I had my legs out and it appeared that she kicked me. She then filmed me repeatedly. I have another home and will move if the police department isn't allowed to do their job. We need to let them do their job.

Mary Flanagan stated Friday was a little close to where I live. It made her uncomfortable and she doesn't like feeling that way. Hattie's was a black owned business that this community supported. Hattie supported us and we supported her. To do it in front of her as if she was still here, she would give everyone a say so. I commend the police for their patience. I am shocked at how the police have been spoken too. It is appalling. I was downtown Friday and I heard how the police where being spoken to it was appalling.

Mayor Kelly closed the public comment period at 4:43 p.m.

Commissioner Dalton said there are multiple people at the meeting tonight with cameras videotaping and taking pictures of the council. We need to think about this and discourage moving forward. I know I feel intimidated when I have a camera in my face. All of this is being live streamed and recorded so the public can watch it.

Commissioner Madigan said people have been coming to council meetings and recording them as long as she has been here. I believe that is a legal thing that people can do. This is something that comes with the job. I am aware of the sites that Lex mentioned but is not in any way, shape, or form affiliated with them. I do want to meet with them and do support Black lives. I support our Police Department and more training for our Police Department.

Commissioner Dalton stated she also has no affiliation with moving Saratoga forwards website or web page. Alexis' webpage is full of hate messages directed at her.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kelly adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret LoPresti
Clerk

Approved: 10/20/2020
Vote: 5 - 0