

February 11, 2020

New Haven Police Commission

To the membership of the Commission:

I come here again tonight requesting the community meeting for the Police Commission be relocated outside the police department to a community friendly space. As you know I have patiently waited for this meeting to accommodate the community. From the first time the Committee approved having public comment on the agenda one of its first concerns would be disruptions in the monthly meeting. That has not happened. It's not something we want to do. We want to have conversations, transparency and be included in on what's going on within the Police Department and the Commission, both charged to serve and protect the community. Moving the meeting to City Hall, a school, church or library once a month is not a huge task. Board of Education is held in a school and Board of Alders is held in City Hall. I don't expect libraries will be unwilling to accommodate a once a month community meeting. Police hold their Compstat meetings weekly within the police department. Is it really asking a lot to host the Commission meeting in a more public space? I think not.

I know the chief believes community policing is alive and well in New Haven. I would like for the Commission to ask the community if this is what they experience. Members of the community have asked for a meeting at a library with the chief and some of his staff. This request was made last year and to date it has not happened. The primary reason is because the chief wants to know who is coming and what do people want to talk about. It almost seems as though he feels the need to prepare for war as opposed to a having civil dialogue about concerns residents may have. That kind of stance is problematic because leadership begins at the top and if the top refuses to accommodate a meeting unless he knows everyone who is showing up and for what it makes the meeting tense from the beginning. If the department is running well with no concerns from its force then why the defensive stance for a two- hour meeting periodically? Actions say a lot more than words. Walking through a neighborhood with staff shaking hands and passing out treats does not cement amicable working relationships. It's simply a "breaking of the ice". Community policing is about a whole lot more.

I'm glad to hear there was a postponement on the notion of handing out pipes, syringes and other drug paraphernalia to people with addiction problems. I feel this city absorbs entirely too many social ills leaving surrounding towns not having to deal with them at all. Why does the city have to handle problems of people who don't live or work here and why are certain areas of the city forced to absorb them? It's bad enough our children who attend an elementary school in the Hill are faced with seeing people on a daily basis with addiction problems and other associated behaviors right outside their school. The suburbs where many of these people live would never tolerate this type of environment around their children. What does it say when African American and Latino children are expected to adapt to it in their environment? I hear all the time about meeting people where they are when it comes to addiction. I simply want to know why do we have to meet them outside our children's schools and in their

neighborhoods. If you want to meet people where they are you will bring your good intentions into their neighborhoods where they live and not into New Haven where all social ills can be found and many times enabled and tolerated. If you want to save lives, save them in Cheshire, Hamden, North Haven, Amity, Branford, Guilford and all the places come from to come here.

A situation occurred recently in New Haven where my youngest son who has a history of mental health and addiction problems was pistol whipped by an employee working for Continuum of Care on Maple St. My son ended up hospitalized and has been receiving psychiatric care since. He gave the officers the name of the person (from any one) who assaulted him and no one from the department has taken the time to follow up with him. I spoke with someone from Project Longevity and was told I have to talk to Chief Jacobsen. I don't have a good experience with police. All the ones I had great experiences throughout the years have left the department so it's not an easy task. What I do know is my son has gone to the hospital to be seen and ended up in handcuffs due to an outstanding warrant. The warrants are always petty behavior and yet the police took advantage of every opportunity to arrest and jail him. If only they were that on top of things in a case when he is the victim. If so it would not be so difficult for me to sit with them and expect a fair investigation. Had my family retaliated I have no doubt there would have been an immediate arrest prior to any investigation. So I have concerns for policing and fairness. I also called his employer, Ms Patty Walker and gave her the info so she would not be blindsided hearing one of her employees is alleged to be involved in assaultive behavior in the community. I followed up to see if she asked any questions of her employee and have yet to hear from her. I'm reminded of times past when people could shoot up my house, spray paint our cars and shoot my sons and never be held accountable. It was the price my children paid for my outspokenness relative to police misconduct at the time. I'm not saying some of the times they were not involved in criminal behavior but they were held accountable for that and for that which they did not do. Wondering if we are returning back to those days under this administration. One thing I have come to understand about crime is that sometimes it's allowed to occur because there is little to no investment in stopping or preventing it. We say we have organizations that work to prevent violence and so I am astonished no one seems to be interested in what happened to my son. If you are waiting for retaliation you will be greatly disappointed. I just want justice for my son as I seek for everyone else's son.

I am here also to support the demands made to improve the deplorable conditions in detention as well as support accepting Mr Pittman into the police academy. We need more community people who love the community and its people and will be an asset to the New Haven Police Department. A police department should represent the people they are charged to protect and serve, otherwise they end up being people who simply come into the city to work and go home to other communities. Hiring from within is a hallmark of community policing. End the barriers which prevent us from seeing our own policing our communities.

Thank you for your time,

Ms Barbara Fair