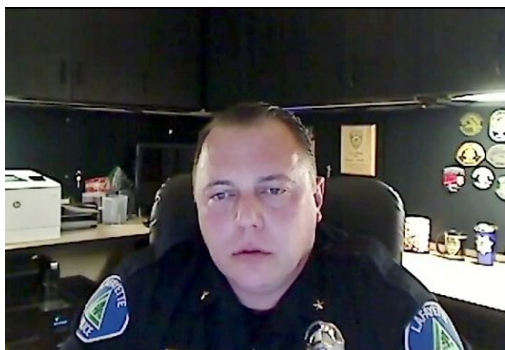


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## Lafayette starts conversation about racism

By Pippa Fisher



Police Chief Ben Alldritt during the Zoom meeting

The city of Lafayette is opening dialogue to address racism within the community and among the first steps was a public safety subcommittee meeting attended by several dozen residents to hear the police response to the hundreds of community emails and questions about police policies and procedures, and a look ahead at the next steps. A town hall meeting will be scheduled in early July for further public input.

At the June 8 city council meeting Police Chief Ben Alldritt publicly condemned the death of George Floyd at the hand of a Minneapolis police officer and the failure of the three other officers to intervene. "It was murder," said Alldritt, unequivocally.

The city voted unanimously to issue a proclamation condemning the murder and pledging to address racism and prejudice within Lafayette.

The June 18 public safety meeting was a first step in that direction and focused its attention on police policies, taking a look at all the questions received on the subject. Alldritt outlined some of the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office's policies, with which the city of Lafayette contracts for police services, and went over the eight procedural guidelines of a campaign designed to decrease police violence known as "8Can'tWait."

Recommendations include use of de-escalation techniques, required warnings by officers before shooting, required intervention by other officers in the event of excessive force, required comprehensive reporting of use of force incidents, and the banning of chokeholds and strangulations. The chief's document including the complete list can be found on the city website below.

"Most of the recommendations outlined in the "8Can'tWait" campaign are addressed in California statutes," explained Alldritt.

Alldritt, along with City Manager Niroop Srivatsa were there to listen to the public. City council members Cam Burks and Steven Bliss both said they were encouraged by the "robust" attendance at the virtual meeting. "It's a unique opportunity to have an urgent discussion," said Bliss.

Several members of the public suggested that the current level of implicit bias training is not enough. Several acknowledged the good work done by the LPD but at least two members of the public questioned policing as a system, rather than problems with individuals and called for more drastic changes.

Another speaker spoke of the embedded systemic racism in the community that she said keeps people of color out of the town, suggesting that the community needs to take steps to encourage diversity and make POC feel safe here.

Burks says he was very encouraged by the engagement. "The candor and call to action by so many residents of Lafayette and Lamorinda were inspiring. I appreciate the sincere efforts of the chief and our city manager to comprehensively address the many letters we have received."

"There is racism in our community," says Burks, "And we need to address it - and to stop it. It is my number one commitment to help bring Lafayette together to do this, and we have so many wonderful residents who have expressed to me over these past weeks that they want to engage, to better our city."

Burks says it was a first step in advancing racial equality in our community. And, he says, "In the law enforcement space, we clearly have a police chief who is open-minded and very eager to explore all options. His desire is one of transparency and trust across the entire community."

The city council was scheduled to look at options for the creation of a task force to develop strategies to further racial equality across the entire community at its June 22 meeting, after this paper went to print.

The police chief's community message is available on the city website:

[www.lovelafayette.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=6196](http://www.lovelafayette.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=6196)

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