

**CLIFTON TOWN COUNCIL  
EMERGENCY MEETING  
THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2020, 7:30 PM  
\*\*ELECTRONIC SESSION VIA ZOOM\*\*  
CLIFTON, VA 20124**

**Present:** Mayor Bill Hollaway; Vice Mayor Steve Effros; Councilmember Chase Hinderstein; Councilmember Regan McDonald; Councilmember Melissa Milne; Councilmember Darrell Poe.  
**Staff:** Amanda Christman, Town Clerk.  
**Absent:** Marilyn Barton, Town Treasurer.

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**The Regular Meeting was called to order by Mayor Hollaway at 7:41 PM.**

Order of Business:

1. Proposal for Banner Demonstrating Clifton Support of Black Lives Matter.

Mayor Hollaway introduced the proposal to hang a banner over Main Street to demonstrate the Town's support of the Black Lives Matter movement and asked how the Town's message could be stated clearly, but in a qualified manner to avoid misinterpretations of the Town's intent as far as supporting the Black Lives Matter platform, which purportedly begins with defunding the police.

Councilmember Milne remarked that Clifton supports racial equality, but not defunding the police. What about two banners including one that states Clifton supports our local police?

Councilmember McDonald asked where the banner request came from. Mayor Hollaway replied that a request was received that the Town "stage a protest," but that several Councilmembers developed the idea of the banner as an alternative. The timing of the banner should be quick, as waiting several months could make it stale.

Tim Wood: stated that he has lived here for fifteen years and thinks this is the first time the Town has waded into a political issue. He would rather see a demonstration versus a banner because it could bring up other issues and wishes the Town would stay out of it and remain neutral.

Councilmember Hinderstein agreed with Mr. Wood on the Town taking a position and would be more in favor of a differently worded banner that is not in direct support of a political organization, such as "Welcome to Clifton, where Black Lives Matter." Supporting a specific political organization could cause confusion.

Councilmember Milne remarked that Black Lives Matter is a movement that is broader than a single organization. Some extreme groups are trying to commandeer the movement, but they are not representative of the broader movement that is peaceful.

Councilmember McDonald asserted that there is a national Black Lives Matter organization with local chapters and they all do say defund the police and even dismantle capitalism. Some pretty radical statements are associated with the organization.

Graham Milne: noted that “defund the police” means reduce the budget where they are spending funds on unnecessary things like military equipment, and fund mental health and youth services instead.

Mayor Hollaway noted that if a government is not properly funding some issues, they should do so, but not necessarily take funds from other agencies and indicated he was not in complete agreement about what the definition means.

Councilmember McDonald indicated that highway disruption is being listed on the DMV chapter’s Black Lives Matter website and that their stated end-game and stated means include things that the Town might not support. Taking this on has a lot of connotations.

Councilmember Poe remarked that the people who are offended by the message are the ones who need to hear it the most, but the banner may not get the message across. Lots of people will see it as they drive through and that can have an impact, but a performative gesture versus action would not actually support the movement. Defunding the police sounds extreme, but there are lots of situations where a guy with gun is an inappropriate response. Funding could be diverted to more effectively deal with such situations. Silence is advocating for the oppressor.

Kim Bittner: It is really important, given that the Town was created by freed slaves, to stand behind the message of support and say something.

Councilmember Milne asserted that, for a majority of Black Lives Matter supporters, the message means “let’s rise up and let’s care,” as opposed to defunding the police and decriminalizing sex work, *et cetera* – and concluded “that’s extreme and doesn’t represent Black Lives Matter. Groups making such claims that are incredibly divisive and hurts the greater good of the movement.”

Councilmember Hinderstein replied that Black Lives Matter is a real organization with a platform and cautioned that the Town should be careful how they refer to the capital-letter version of Black Lives Matter.

Kandace Rash: how about a banner that states “Clifton supports racial equality” instead?

Peter Noonan: supported “Welcome to Clifton, where Black Lives Matter,” since it takes away the political concerns and is welcoming to everyone in the community. “We need to call attention to the structural inequalities that need to be addressed,” he added.

Corey Hinderstein: appreciated the open discussion and agreed with the idea that supporting Black Lives Matter could be misinterpreted as supporting an organization rather than the movement, “[a]lthough those words have power and should be embraced rather than avoided. ‘Welcome to Clifton, where Black Lives Matter:’ those three words are quite powerful.” She felt uncomfortable with the suggestion of a second banner supporting the police because it sounds like “All Lives Matter” which makes her uncomfortable. The wording should be to support the movement not a specific organization.

Councilmember Milne indicated that the community supports both, and there are radicals on both sides. She believed the majority of protestors are peaceful and not all police are bad, and that Councilmember Hinderstein’s suggestion for the banner was a good one.

Jane Barker: submitted a written remark thanking the Council for discussing the banner.

Mayor Hollaway noted that there have been questions about why the Town is wading into a political matter? This is different and perhaps unprecedented. The request is coming from the Town Council rather than an outside organization. Such a request does not open the door to anyone who wants to hang a banner over Main Street. This does seem to be a unique point in time and is a very important issue. The action is not meant to promote the Town, increase revenue or glorify ourselves, but rather to put whatever weight we have behind the voices of Black people. However, the Town should be careful not to tie itself to a particular political organization.

Steve Bittner: agreed with the language suggested by Councilmember Hinderstein and remarked that “incremental support from little towns really create a groundswell of support and action across the nation.” However, it should be unattached from any specific political organization.

Michelle Stein: agreed with the language and the banner.

Rachael Howell: supported the language of the two suggested banners, in either case. She concluded that “[i]t is important to note that what we are seeing right now is a time when people are realizing that policing the message needs to stop because that is what has brought this issue to a head. This area is more privileged than others and we are trying to be supportive and the time is now.”

Vice Mayor Effros extended appreciation for a lot of the comments from the community, especially those of Ms. Bittner and Ms. Hinderstein. He explained that he does not mind the capitalized-letter Black Lives Matter because it “means a whole lot more than what the organization is pointing to. The meaning is that ‘social justice is important and our country doesn’t have it.’ The

action of placing a banner over Main Street in support of this concept is extraordinary for the Town and is not intended to be used lightly for many other issues. It is time for the community, and everyone else, to speak up.” Some people can refer to a website with a stated platform, but he explained that he can just as easily point to other websites saying incorrect things about what BLM means. The terminology of “BLM” is being used as short-hand to say: “the issue of social justice is in front of us, and we cannot ignore it.” Vice Mayor Effros continued that if Councilmember Hinderstein is worried about the Town being identified with a specific BLM group, Mr. Effros could go along with Mr. Hinderstein’s suggested wording, “but capital-letter ‘BLM’ is what’s being used in every news story. We are the privileged and it’s time to recognize it. We haven’t done anything about it in a long time and I wouldn’t support any other signs.”

Mayor Hollaway asked about the proposed colors of the sign, to which Councilmember Milne responded black and white. The first line would read “Welcome to Clifton,” and the second line would read “where Black Lives Matter.”

Councilmember Poe added that the Town has a website which can be a place to post resources about equal justice and anti-racism to help educate the community. He requested that such action should be taken in addition to erecting the proposed banner.

Vice Mayor Effros agreed with Councilmember Poe and posited that the Town just had the beginnings of a conversation about what it means to defund the police. “In reality it is a nuanced conversation about educating ourselves and each other about what is really going on and what this really means.” He asked whether the police really want to be responsible for dealing with opioid addiction issues, homeless people and mental illness; “most police chiefs would say not. There has been good, healthy discussion tonight.”

Mayor Hollaway indicated that the Town Council should review community education materials prior to posting on the website. Upon further questioning about Black Lives Matter’s stated platform with ranked positions, he answered that the number one demand is to defund police, the second is to not add new jails, and the third is to decriminalize sex work.

Graham Milne: interjected that the three demands mentioned are in reference to the D.C. chapter. The main BLM website “about” section describes their priorities which do not mention any of those three things just listed by Mayor Hollaway, and also noted that Clifton is not D.C.

Geri Yantis: cited that blacklivesmatter.com says defund the police and mused that the slogan has been lost and is now a political organization. He was concerned how the Town could support a political organization, and what future organizations will the Town be asked to support. The proposal is a slippery slope.

Vice Mayor Effros responded that the term “Black Lives Matter” has been lost by anyone claiming organizational control and is now being used by all sorts of people. The ones marching in the streets are there for social justice.

Tim Wood: reiterated that he does not support the Town wading into political issues, however, he would be proud to support a general statement in support of social justice. He opined that the Town of Clifton’s government is not here to do anything other than act administratively on issues such as architectural appropriateness and the like.

Vice Mayor Effros replied that he understood the concerns about political battles yet asked how a “political issue” is defined. “This is a unique situation.”

Councilmember Poe stated that people stop policing the message in order to make Mr. Wood comfortable, and noted that the Council, as elected officials, constitute a political body.

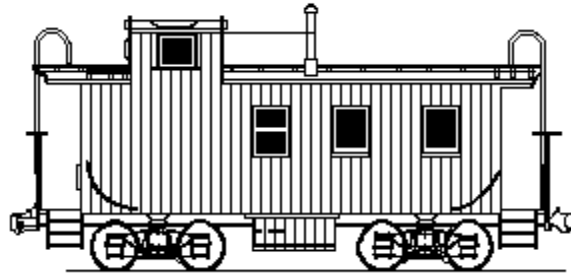
- **Councilmember Poe moved to approve the proposed banner stating “Welcome to Clifton, where Black Lives Matter,” seconded by Councilmember Milne. Mr. Poe amended the motion to include that the banner be hung as soon as it can be obtained, and to be placed for sixty days after which time the Council will review, for a cost of up to \$950, which was further seconded by Ms. Milne. The motion was approved by roll-call: Hollaway: Aye; Effros: Aye; Poe: Aye; Milne: Aye; Hinderstein: Aye; (Councilmember McDonald abstained).**

Mayor Hollaway reported that one related communication received by a resident suggested changing the name of Chapel Street back to its earlier name of “Harris Street,” which was named after a Black family by that name who used to live there. It may not be a simple action to take, but it has been proposed. More information will be forthcoming at future meetings.

2. Adjournment.

- **Councilmember Hinderstein moved to adjourn, seconded by Vice Mayor Effros. The motion was approved by roll-call: Hinderstein: Aye; Hollaway: Aye; Effros: Aye; Poe: Aye; Milne: Aye; McDonald: Aye.**

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.



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Until further notice from the Mayor of Clifton, and in accordance with the Resolution of the Town Council regarding Remote Participation by Electronic Means Policy and the Town Council Continuity of Government Methods Authorizing Remote Participation by Electronic Means Without a Physical Quorum Being Present Pursuant to Virginia Law, the Town of Clifton Town Council is holding the Meeting noticed herein electronically for the purpose of continuity of government of the Town of Clifton.

The meeting will be conducted using Zoom teleconferencing audio and video service, and connection information will be provided to members of the public to afford the opportunity to citizens to witness the operation of the Town of Clifton government. Connection information is available from, and will be provided by, the Town Clerk.

Order of Business:

1. Proposal for Banner Demonstrating Clifton Support of Black Lives Matter.
2. Adjournment.