

SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL: ACTING LOCALLY - YELLOW SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT REIMAGINED

From: Lisa Kreeger

I am submitting this call to action in follow up to the June 15th meeting of Village Council where a resolution declaring racism a public health emergency was passed. Also in that meeting there was a recommitment to quickly move forward with the new Justice System Advisory Board.

Over the past years our Chief Brian Carlson, working with the YSPD team and Village Manager Josue Salmeron, has led positive change. The previous Justice System Task Force accomplished some very real change thanks to a committed, expert and engaged citizenry. Now, with formation of a Justice System Advisory Board and support for a Citizen Review Board, we will build on that work. This call to action is in support of the work that has already been done and to energize momentum for rapid change going forward.

I was inspired to an even greater sense of urgency after listening to the June 24th Antioch College Spotlight on Excellence with Judge LaDoris Cordell (Antioch College, '71). She observed that there had been enough committees, enough commissions, enough discussion with insufficient real change. She urged us to move quickly and act. This resonated for me as I pondered our work in Yellow Springs. With Judge Cordell's voice ringing in my heart and mind I call for some *immediate changes* that should not hinge on the formation and decision-making process of an advisory board or committee.

I ask the Council to consider this set of actions and to ask – **WHY NOT RIGHT NOW?**

- Immediately begin work on revising the police budget to create a second full time Community Outreach Coordinator position. This is in addition to creation of a full time position from the current part time position. It is understood that this could lead to cuts in other areas.
- Stop sending police armed with lethal force to low risk non-criminal calls (the majority of our calls in Yellow Springs)
- Require and hire for a YSPD that is every day more and more expert in de-escalation
- Change policies to hold every YSPD officer responsible to the Guidelines for Village Policing: 1) Safety Centered, 2) Resolution Oriented, 3) Demonstrably Inclusive, 4) Locally Minded. What does that look like in action?
 - Decriminalize marijuana use
 - Stop pulling people over for minor infractions (e.g. single tail light out)
 - Stop approaching people randomly
 - Eliminate the militaristic 'look' of our YSPD uniforms. This was something that our consultant, Bob Wasserman, commented on.
- Revise the YSPD evaluation process to evaluate against the Guidelines.

It can be challenging to re-imagine changes at this level as the systems of power that have led us to this point have been in place for hundreds of years. The challenge must not overcome us. The time is now in Yellow Springs. We have the right energy, wisdom and community to begin a *rapid* process of reallocating resources and implementing programs that turn us toward even deeper reforms and consistencies right here in our community. We must put taxpayer money in support of our values.

Why not right now?



July 1, 2020

TO: Yellow Springs Village Council

FROM: Marianne MacQueen

RE: Proposal for Rethinking Policing in Yellow Springs.

Rethinking Policing in Yellow Springs

As the nation once again confronts our embedded racism, one lens has narrowed on the role of policing. Police have always been a State-sanctioned way to control the poor, minorities, labor unions, immigrants, etc. Most of us in Yellow Springs have not experienced policing in this way. However, we don't have to look too far to find a young person, an Antioch student, or a man of color who has. This is true in spite of the almost decade-long efforts of Village Council and the Yellow Springs Police Department to align our practice of policing with Village values.

As a Village, we have a limited impact on national policing, systemic racism and economic injustice. There are things we have been doing and we can do more. At its June 15th meeting, Village Council passed a resolution declaring racism a public health emergency. A new Justice System Advisory Board is being formed to carry on the two years' work of the previous Justice System Task Force.

The National outcry to "Defund the Police" has various meanings. I believe a more appropriate phrase for Yellow Springs is "Rethinking Policing". Toward that end I have three recommendations for Council, the Yellow Springs Police Department and Justice System Advisory Board:

1. Focus Village public safety efforts on human services, health and safety.
2. Disarm the Yellow Springs Police Department, with few exceptions.
3. Support county and state-wide efforts to reform the broken justice system.

Focus on Human Services, Health and Safety

To be clear, the Yellow Springs Police Department has historically leaned toward the guardian ideal of policing rather than the warrior image. Chief Carlson, in particular, has moved forward many practices and programs including but not limited to: establishing the position of Community Outreach Specialist; mandatory Crisis Intervention Training for all officers; scenario-based training; and reaching out to those who are coming back into the community having been incarcerated.

Yet these are reform efforts in light of the main thrust of police officers as crime fighters. Both training and the appearance of police officers in uniform encourage the media image of officers at the ready to deal with criminals. However, that isn't really what our officers spend most of their time doing. They patrol our streets, respond to medical and other non-crime related emergencies, manage disputes, deal with vehicular traffic, check on businesses and on homes



when people are on vacation, etc. With the addition of our part-time Community Outreach Specialist, the YSPD is able to go a step further in assisting people who may be homeless, hungry, lost, and suffer from mental disorders and/or drug abuse. These systemic issues, I suggest, are at the heart of what occupy much of our officers' time.

If their time is spent helping people in various ways, is there a mismatch between how police officers are trained and what they actually do? Are there important public safety and health needs that aren't being met because of the current model of policing and use of public resources? Currently Yellow Springs spends \$1,690,300 on our police department which translates to 44% of our General Fund or about \$450/person/year. We should identify the most pressing community needs and design a public safety department to meet those needs. We might, for example, dramatically increase personnel trained in various types of community outreach and dramatically decrease those who focus on crime related activities.

This brings up another issue, namely that many who could benefit from public safety services fear the police. Therefore, we should examine whether some of these services should be provided outside the police department. I am not suggesting that we increase our public safety budget. Rather, I am suggesting that we develop a plan to divert resources to most effectively meet our actual needs.

Disarm the Police

As long as our officers carry weapons – guns in particular – and wear the accessories that go with armament, they are maintaining their position by force. They are doing so whether they want to or not. The implicit and explicit message is, “do what I say because I can arrest you, hurt you and even kill you”.

Most middle class whites such as myself are inured to seeing officers decked out in their uniforms with their guns, tasers, etc. We may feel protected by seeing them armed because we know they aren't coming after us. But for people of color, especially black men, the message and reality is much different.

Why do Yellow Springs police carry guns? Only a small fraction police time is spent fighting crime. According to a study by Jeff Asher and Ben Horwitz only 1 – 4 % of police officers' time nationally is spent fighting violent crime.ⁱ In Yellow Springs, I suspect it is even less. Do guns make the police or the public safer? Could weapons actually be counterproductive? The perception of crime – and the fear engendered by it – has increased over recent decades, even as violent crime itself has decreased. The media have created a public perception that policing is dangerous work, and police officers (and the public) have responded to that fear. Actually, policing is not one of the most dangerous professions. Officers are much more likely to die from suicide than from being killed in the line of work.ⁱⁱ

Franklin Roosevelt famously said, “The only thing to fear is fear itself.” The impact of fear on the officer at our infamous 2017 New Year's Eve incident was very clear to me. I was clearly no threat to the officer when I went up to him as he sat in his vehicle. The young black man who



came up beside me was also friendly, if a bit inebriated. But I saw the knee-jerk reaction as the officer whipped out his taser, pushed open the door and started to chase the young man.

In many other countries, police officers don't, or seldom, carry weapons. How is it that they are able to protect their citizens and deal with crime? "What we can identify in these countries is that people have a tradition—and an expectation—that officers will police by consent rather than with the threat of force," says Guðmundur Ævar Oddsson, associate professor of sociology at Iceland's University of Akureyri.ⁱⁱⁱ Policing by consent is what we want in Yellow Springs. I believe that is what Chief Carlson and our department want as well.

I request that the Justice System Advisory Board work with the Chief, our solicitor and the YSPD to re-envision a department in which officers do not carry weapons; and then begin a program of gradual disarmament. A Department in which most of our officers do not carry weapons (and accompanying paraphernalia) could make a profound change in the way our community and our police view each other.

Support County and State Reform Efforts

Yellow Springs is not an island. It behooves us to do what we can to influence the justice system beyond our borders. Strong alliances and relationships within our region and the State of Ohio magnify our efforts and can benefit Yellow Springs. We should encourage our Justice System Advisory Board to seek opportunities to support others engaged in reform efforts. The most obvious of these is the local effort that grew out of opposition to the recently defeated county jail tax. Greene County Citizens for Compassionate Justice (an outgrowth of Greene County Citizens Against Giant Jail Tax) has an ambitious goal to "...decrease the jail populations and better serve the needs of the incarcerated, families and the county."^{iv}

We are now at a particular moment in time. Yellow Springs can take advantage of this to reimagine the practice and profession of Village policing. The YSPD needs to be our partner in this. Our police are the ones doing the work and understand the governing regulations, policies, and practices by which they are bound. We can build on what has already been done – by the past Village Managers and Councils, the Justice System Task Force, and by the hard work of the department itself, especially under the leadership of Chief Carlson. When we redefine the practice of public safety, we will attract those people – both current and potential – who want to be a part of the Yellow Springs Public Safety Department and policing by consent.

ⁱ How Do the Police Actually Spend their Time?, Asher & Horiwitz, June 19, 2020, NYT.com

ⁱⁱ Huffpost, 6/17/20

ⁱⁱⁱ Time.com, 6/19/20

^{iv} Greene County Citizens Against Giant Jail Tax, Facebook page, 6/8/20

THE **365** PROJECT THINKS
**YELLOW
SPRINGS**
WILL FEEL LIKE
HOME
TO YOU, TOO.

A **PROGRESSIVE**
HISTORY INSPIRES US

From a haven for formerly enslaved people to a refuge for Japanese Americans exiting WWII internment camps, the Village has long had people of color in leadership positions, actively shaping the community.

Inseparable from Antioch College, the Village has drawn such luminaries as Mary Church Terrell, Coretta Scott King, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and A. Leon Higginbotham.

Today, Yellow Springs has Human Rights Commissions, affordable housing initiatives, diversity training in the schools, and measures welcoming immigrants. YS prohibits LGBTQ discrimination and is one of the most gay-friendly villages in Ohio. It's no surprise we were named one of America's coolest small towns.

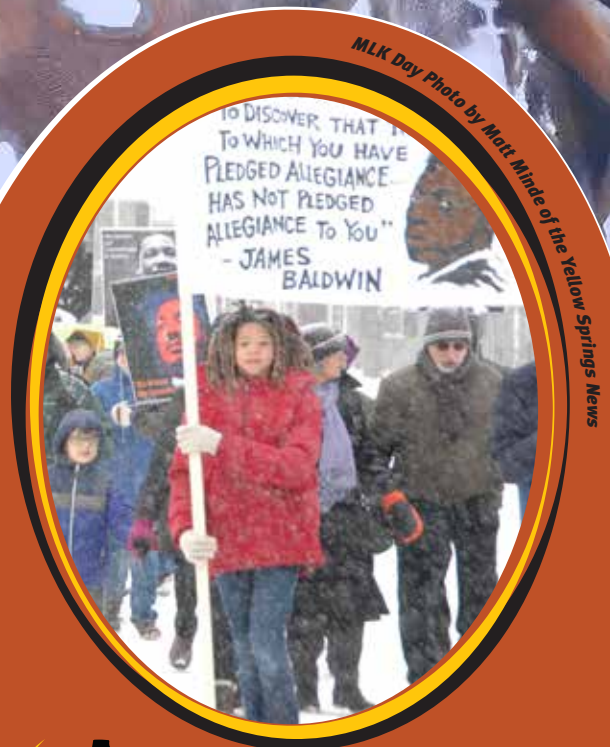
No matter where you're coming from, there's a place for you in **Yellow Springs**.



JOIN US
IN **YELLOW SPRINGS**

The 365 Project is a volunteer group of local professionals, educators, parents and youth dedicated to promoting diverse African-American heritage, culture, educational equity and mentoring future generations, 365 days a year. Please visit our website for more information and resources about life in Yellow Springs.

THE365PROJECTYS.ORG



**BE@
HOME
HERE
YELLOW
SPRINGS**

**LOOKING FOR A
COMMUNITY
THAT VALUES
PROGRESSIVE
IDEALS,
THE ARTS,
EDUCATION &
DIVERSITY OF ?
CULTURES & RACES**

ENJOY A SMALL TOWN **OASIS** WITH **BIG** CITY APPEAL

You can live in this walkable welcoming community with a vibrant downtown, home to over seventy-five locally-owned eateries, shops, and galleries including a grocery, hardware store, pharmacy, salons, credit union, and movie theater.

Benefit from amenities such as a library, a post office, a wellness center, pool, skate park, playground and recreational fields. Enjoy access to 2000 acres of parks, streams and forests and to over 340 miles of paved multi-use recreational trails.

For commuters and those who enjoy a city fix, there is easy access to I-70 and I-675 getting you to Dayton in 30 minutes, and Cincinnati, Columbus and their airports in 60 minutes.

CHOOSE FROM **INNOVATIVE** EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

Yellow Springs is known for its innovative quality educational choices.

- Preschool options begin at 18 months.
- Inventive public schools, or creative private options engage students.
- 89% of YS High School graduates pursue higher education
- Two institutions of higher education, Antioch College & Antioch University Midwest, are in the Village.
- Wright State University, Wittenberg, Clark State, University of Dayton, and Sinclair are all within 20 miles
- Two historically Black universities, Wilberforce and Central State, are within 7 miles.

PARTICIPATE IN **DIVERSE** CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Cultural venues and celebrations offer many ways to celebrate our diverse interests.

- Martin Luther King Day Celebration
- YS Pride Parade and festivities
- Biannual Street Fair, Springsfest, Art on the Lawn and PorchFest
- Kwanzaa Celebration
- Black history walking tours by youth leaders and their mentors
- Coretta Scott King Center for Cultural & Intellectual Freedom
- World House Choir, Community Band, chorus, orchestra, dance and theater
- Independent and Black film series hosted by our non-profit movie theater
- An award-winning local newspaper and NPR radio station, WYSO
- 16 faith organizations; AME to Baha'i
- A Women's Park commemorative garden
- Weekly peace vigils
- The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center is within 7 miles.

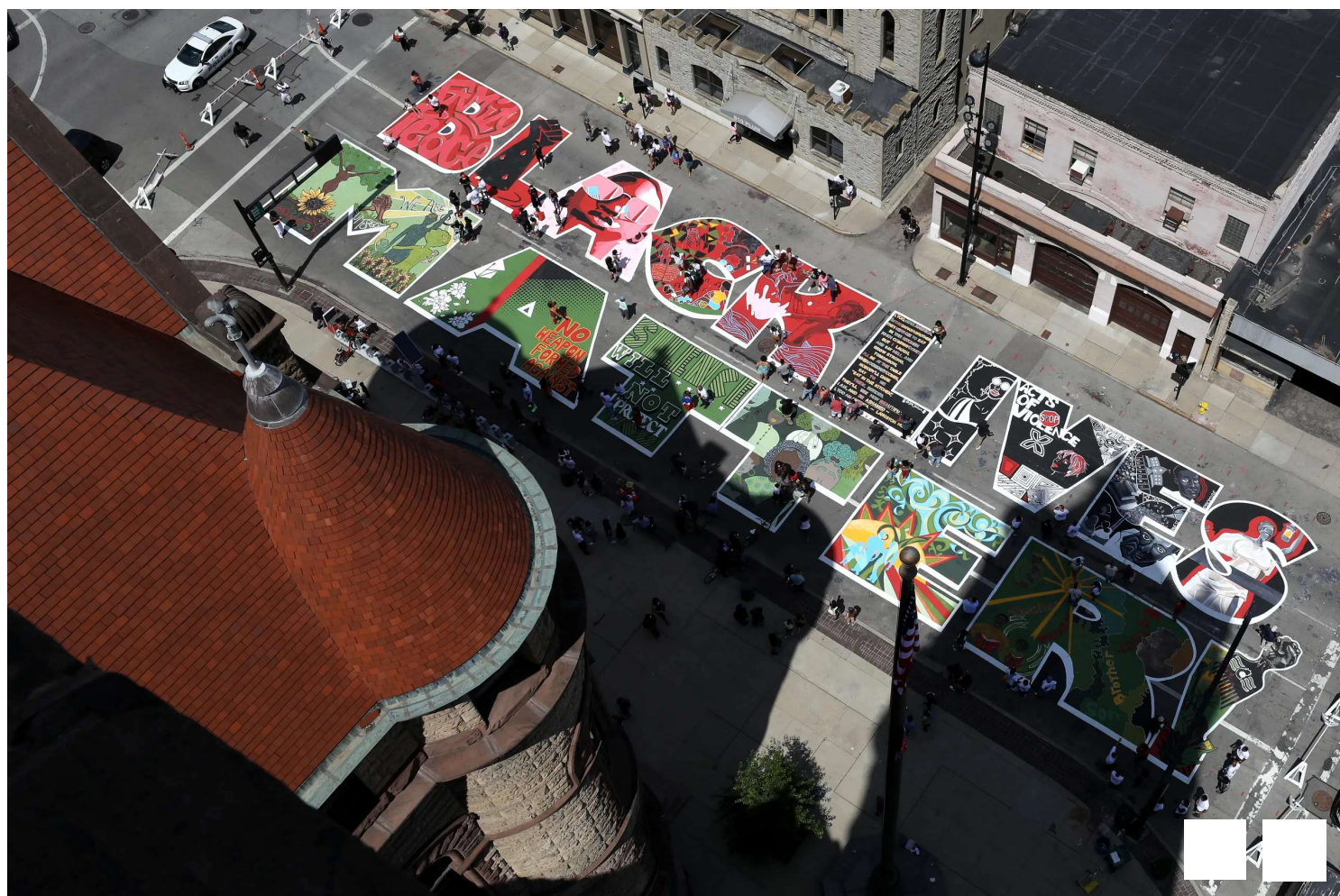
YELLOW SPRINGS: A SMALL TOWN WITH A WIDE EMBRACE.

The featured murals by Sarah Dickens & Pierre Nagley are some of the many public art installations to be found in Yellow Springs.

Black Lives Matter! mural unveiled in front of Cincinnati City Hall

10 PHOTOS

4:45 p.m. EDT June 19, 2020



Artists and community members unveil the finished Black Lives Matter! mural, Friday, June 19, 2020, along Plum Street in front of Cincinnati City Hall in Cincinnati. Cincinnati joins cities across America in the movement by revealing a mural Friday that now adorns a block on Plum Street, strategically situated in front of City Hall.

KAREEM ELGAZZAR/THE ENQUIRER