



June 9, 2020

Dear Community Members,

Racism is a public health crisis, a crisis that cannot be denied given the ongoing police brutality coupled with too many other injustices and inequities. Yellow Springs must lead our region, state and country in continuing to take intentional and meaningful action to respond to an unjust system that is killing people.

While there is still much real work to be done, significant progress has been made with our local police team as they have worked to incorporate the Guidelines for Village Policing – developed in collaboration with community members and entities such as The 365 Project – into procedures and approaches to promote the Village Value to “Intentionally promote anti-racism, inclusion, equity and accessibility through all policies, procedures and processes.” Our officers are engaging in innovative training focused on undoing the cognitive & bias dissonance encouraged by traditional police training that causes some officers to dehumanize persons of color, our department now has a social worker on staff (rare across the country and unheard of in a community our size), and the standard practice now requires that all cases that can be are addressed in our Mayor’s Court. These represent a few of the important actions that have been taken by your local government, and we have the courage to continue real reform.

We must do better! The Village is uniquely situated when compared to other communities. For example, we rely heavily on our police department to fill social service gaps and provide support for our residents that they would not likely receive in another municipality or if we left it to the county or state. We are committed to continuing to make policy changes that actively promote anti-racism and decriminalize poverty, including targeted changes related to marijuana possession, enforcement of minor traffic/vehicle violations, limitations on use of force (e.g. tear gas) and avoiding evictions as well as broader initiatives that protect our community members and ensure that Villagers and visitors are treated with respect and understanding. We want to work with you to determine how our public safety and justice system best serves our community, being fully open and transparent in identifying effective responses to combat racism.

Among the initiatives that we will advocate for immediate implementation are the Justice System Advisory Committee, which will be empowered to help determine the complete scope of actions that the Village can take to address institutional racism. A key component of this work will be pursuing the establishment of a Citizen Review Board to better understand any community member-peace officer conflicts that arise and how to resolve them in line with Village Values that ensure a welcoming and inclusive approach that embodies respect, fairness and equity for all.

We need you to continue to be involved to help deepen the trust that our police team has been working diligently and thoughtfully for several years to strengthen. Now, possibly more than at any time in our country’s history, we must work together to instill real and lasting change that protects black lives, liberties and pursuits of happiness.

Stay Strong & #DoSomething,

Lisa Kreeger & Brian Housh
Village Council Members