

BOROUGH OF STATE COLLEGE  
CENTRE COUNTY, PA  
RESOLUTION 1258

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE BOROUGH OF STATE COLLEGE, CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA IN RESPONSE TO AND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE DEMANDING RACIAL JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND ACTION

WHEREAS we are a nation in crisis – not just of a recent global pandemic, but of an over 400 year history of racist systems and institutions that originated in slavery and continue today in our institutions, our healthcare systems, economics and business, our prisons, and our communities.

WHEREAS national and international Black Lives Matter protests and demonstrations are demanding that elected officials take action to address the scourge of institutionalized racism and white supremacy that allowed the killing of George Floyd in police custody, Breonna Taylor in her own home, and Ahmaud Arbery while out on a run, among others.

WHEREAS local organizers of the Black Lives Matter movement have walked side-by-side with members of the 3/20 Coalition and other community members and organizations demanding change from their local elected officials – including this Council.

WHEREAS this Council has previously affirmed our denouncement of white supremacy in all its forms, we recognize that “all its forms” requires us to look at ourselves; the systems we have inherited, sustained, or created; and engage in challenging and important conversations with our community, and yes, with our police.

WHEREAS the State College Borough Council – the elected body responsible for policy making and fiduciary responsibility for the Home Rule Municipality of State College – should and must respond to demands from the public, join them in shared efforts to move our community forward, and set in motion a plan for meaningful and sustainable change in State College.

WHEREAS both Mayor Filippelli and Manager Fontaine have provided updates to the community on our efforts over the last year to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our operations and our policing on June 15, 2020, this resolution is intended to identify steps that Borough Council is taking to affirm our commitment to building a safe, equitable, and just State College.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College implement a Community Oversight Board to address discrimination, bias, and racism in our local government and police, and our 2016 Task Force on Policing and Communities of Color recommended the implementation of a citizens review board, we commit to providing the needed resources – either financial or time – to see the formation and implementation of such a group no later than August 1, 2020. Any financial resources needed for the development of this Community Oversight Board will come from currently budgeted Police Department funds.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College divest from guns during the service of mental health checks and Mental Health Warrants (302), we affirm the important work of the Task Force on Mental Health Crisis Services charged to evaluate mental health crisis response in Centre County. We commit to taking expedient action on the recommendations of the task force within three months of the submission of the report. We will call a series of special meetings designed as educational sessions for Council and members of the public to more fully understand the implications of Task Force recommendations to generate a timeline for implementation.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College revise standard operating procedures which emphasize de-escalation strategies to be used during engagement and to have consequences for failure to execute, we affirm our commitment to the "8 Can't Wait" solutions recommended by Campaign Zero. While we acknowledge current training efforts by SCPD exceed Pennsylvania and National standards for police departments and that all officers received de-escalation training in 2018, we commit to requiring de-escalation training on an annual basis, including Crisis Intervention Training and Use of Force/De-escalation Scenario Based Training. We are calling a special working session for Monday, June 29, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. specifically dedicated to beginning a discussion of current policy and training, future training needs, recommendations by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and our work with the National League of Cities Race, Equity, and Leadership initiative. As the elected body responsible for policy making, a review and understanding of the hiring process including specifications and background investigations; the composition; and the compensation of the SCPD is also critical.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College provide public access to officer misconduct information and disciplinary history when death results, we note that such information is not publicly released except for misconduct that results in demotion or discharge as it is exempt under the PA Right to Know Law Section 708 b. We commit to making policing data public where possible and easily accessible on the State College Borough website and work with the State to advocate to make additional data public. We further commit to holding a public comment hearing prior to the negotiation of our next police contract beginning in late 2021.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College publicly release the protocol and body cam footage for officers accused of misuse of force and race-based policing, we acknowledge that current policy allows for release of said footage under section 502 of the act of February 14, 2008 (P.L.6, No.3) known as the Right-to-Know Law, but pledge to review the details of that agreement in the next six months. This report should include the timeline for body cam implementation covering the past 18 months, as well as projected timeline for any remaining implementation steps. We further request a report on the implementation of body cams with the State College Police Department at our Monday, July 6, 2020 meeting of Council.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College ban the use of knee holds and choke holds, we affirm the current policy of the State College Police Department that already prohibits the use of chokeholds, strangleholds, and knee restraints. We further commit to the development of an ordinance that will prohibit the use of

chokeholds, strangleholds, and knee restraints in the Borough – for all police and private security companies employed within the Borough.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College provide transparency and the release of policing data regarding policing with special attention to race and ethnicity, we acknowledge that this data had been available on the PA State website until 2019 and that the Borough has registered as a participant in the Federal Bureau of Investigation Use of Force Database, but pledge to ensure such data, along with the SCPD policy and procedures manual, is accessible via the State College Borough website.

WHEREAS it has been demanded that State College reallocate funding away from the State College Police Department to programs that address root causes of suffering and violence, and provide benefit to public well-being and safety, we pledge to discuss in our next budget planning cycle our distribution of funds across the police department, community programming, commitments supporting mental health and housing, and community rebuilding in the wake of COVID-19.

WHEREAS meaningful change in State College is needed, similar conversations about access to policing information; resource allocation; community safety; and diversity, equity, and inclusion should also be taking place in our neighboring communities – Penn State, townships in the Centre Region, and Centre County, and we urge those entities to move forward with such action.

WHEREAS we are unable to specifically address two additional demands due to ongoing litigation, we do recognize the deep pain and trauma that has been experienced by many in our community over the past year.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the State College Borough Council commits to setting a course towards making challenging and important sustainable changes in our approach to public safety, policing, equity, and investing in our community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that by way of this resolution, we committed ourselves to:

- providing the needed resources for the formation of a Community Oversight Board;
- a series of special meetings following receipt of the Task Force on Mental Health Crisis Services report to more fully understand the recommendations to generate a timeline for implementation;
- calling a special working session for Monday, June 29, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. specifically dedicated to beginning a discussion of current police training, hiring, composition, compensation and training, future training needs, PERF recommendations and our work with National League of Cities Race, Equity, and Leadership initiative;
- receiving a report on the implementation of body cams with the State College Police Department at our July 6, 2020 meeting of Council;

- to developing an ordinance that will continue the current policy that prohibits the use of chokeholds, strangleholds, and knee restraints in the Borough;
- ensuring that policing data (where applicable by law), along with the SCPD policy and procedures manual, is accessible via the State College Borough website;
- discussing our distribution of funds across the police department, community programming, commitments supporting mental health and housing, and community rebuilding in the wake of COVID 19 in our next budget planning cycle; and
- holding a public comment hearing prior to the negotiation of our next police contract.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council will add a standing section to each business meeting agenda specifically focused on "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives" where we and the public will receive updates on our various initiatives, discuss items requiring action by Council in the future, and take action on items before Council that move us closer to being a safer, more equitable, and more just State College.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council prioritizes the hiring of a Borough Equity Officer to join the Borough Leadership Team focused on providing overall direction and guidance, planning, policy input, strategic communication, and internal support for the Borough's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; identifying training needs around diversity, equity, and inclusion for Borough staff, police officers, and elected and appointed officials; working with the Borough leadership team to diversify our staff; and more.

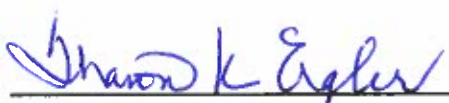
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we support a series of police reform efforts proposed by the Pennsylvania Black Legislative Caucus and call on Representative Scott Conklin, Representative Kerry Benninghoff, and Senator Jake Corman to fully support the passage of these proposals from committee so that they may come to their respective chambers for action. While we work towards change in State College, many of the reforms we would like to see require action by the Commonwealth. Just as action is being demanded of us, we demand action of you.

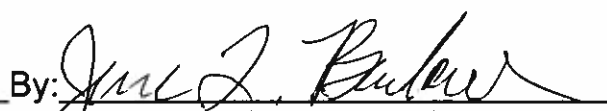
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the work of equity, racial and social justice, and safety will never be fully resolved, we pledge to work tirelessly and with full commitment, recognizing our own shortcomings and biases and to seek input from those who can guide us.

RESOLVED this 23rd day of June, 2020.

ATTEST:

BOROUGH OF STATE COLLEGE

  
 Sharon K. Eglar  
 Assistant Borough Secretary

By:   
 Jesse L. Barlow  
 President of Council