

Comments by Councilmember John J. Kennedy at the Pasadena City Council Meeting on Monday, 8 June 2020

Now is an extraordinary moment. A moment when the barbaric, chillingly casual killing of George Floyd on a public street closely followed the killing of Breonna Taylor in her own home during a botched execution of a no knock warrant, the vigilante killing of jogger Ahmaud Arbery and the attempted weaponizing of the police by an entitled, rule violating dog walker in New York City's Central Park has belatedly created a national consensus that black lives do indeed matter. A moment when history will judge whether our core morality rose to confront the long simmering racial justice issues as the world impatiently waits and watches. A moment that erases any disingenuous or conveniently oblivious claims of "I don't know" or "I am not aware."

The question is can we meet this most extraordinary of moments.

Pasadena is not immune or insulated from national movements or trends; We echo and mirror them. For many Pasadenans, the recent events in Minneapolis, Louisville, Georgia and New York City triggered painful personal memories of their own experiences.

To that point, I applaud the local protestors who have been peacefully exercising their most cherished of American rights. One event I must note is the protest organized by the Pasadena National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, faith leaders, Students, and other leaders last Tuesday, June 2 that began at First AME Church and caravanned to a program at City Hall. I was honored to participate in that historic, peaceful event.

Additionally, I applaud the fine men and women of the Pasadena Police Department who have displayed calm professionalism and an understanding of this moment during the last 2 weeks and particularly during last week's protest. I must acknowledge Chief John Perez who set a welcome tone as he personally directed traffic for an extended period outside First AME Church at the start of the community vigil last Tuesday June 2.

Problems create opportunities. Opportunities to do better, to be better. Opportunities to genuinely ask where do we go from here? Can we meet this moment?

In a glass half full spirit, I view this as a win-win opportunity. When everyone in our community is protected and served by the police, everyone, including the police, is safer. When the police are held to standards of justice similar to those imposed on residents, police are less likely to be vilified and endangered by those feeling aggrieved and vengeful.

I offer 4 starting points, but admittedly not exhaustive, suggestions to move us forward and meet the moment:

1. **Civilian Oversight.** Justice demands accountability and transparency that sends a symbolic and substantive message to all.
2. **Budget and Resource Review.** The mission of our Police Department is to serve and protect the community by safeguarding lives and property. As we engage in a honest,

likely emotional at times, public conversation of how to best fulfill that mission, I hope that we can view this challenge with fresh, enlightened eyes that see what we can do and can be. The core question is how to best deploy our City's finite resources to achieve this mission.

3. **Interaction.** Develop additional ways that our police officers can interact with the community in non-confrontational settings that remind both groups that good people exist on both sides of the badge.
4. **Ongoing Review Process.** We must impose self-discipline by establishing an ongoing review process to completely address what the heat of the moment may miss. In the warp speed of today that recognizes where our nation collectively was just 2 weeks ago today before George Floyd became a household name and movement symbol, we must allow our decisions of the moment to have the flexibility to adapt to additional information and solutions. Our collective 5 second attention span cannot be allowed to undermine desperately needed justice as we soon move on to the next shiny object.

We have an opportunity to be on the right side of history, let's meet this moment and ensure that our actions match our words.