

From: Ian Pomplin

Sent: Friday, June 05, 2020 8:41 AM

To: Owczarski, Jim

Subject: Comments for the Common Council Special Meeting Today, 6/5

I am writing to express my disgust at the law enforcement response to protests over the last few days. Peaceful protesters have taken to the streets to demand accountability for police brutality. What do the police officers do in response? They beat the protesters, they kettle the protesters, they shoot "less than lethal weapons" at protesters, they fly military helicopters over the city, and they gas protesters. Night after night, the entire city sees the police in action, whether attending protests or through the various live streams from news media or private individuals. If this is what occurs when the city is watching, what occurs when the city is not? What abuses are the police doing when the cameras are off? While some of this may be attributed to other police departments the Common Council has no control over, i.e. county police or suburban police departments, it is an undeniable fact that police representing the City of Milwaukee have committed acts that bring shame to our city. If a protest is against police brutality you cannot commit police brutality to end the protest. You cannot end protests over police brutality with brutal force by the police.

Now I see that the police have fabricated a "Molotov cocktail" out of a water bottle and what appears to be a water purifier rolled in dirt. This is clearly a fabrication by police, because Molotov cocktails are made nearly exclusively with glass, cloth, and an incendiary liquid. Two of these elements are absolutely missing from the sham device and we have no evidence there was any incendiary liquid contained inside the thin plastic bottle. Further, the police story has changed multiple times. First, the police claimed that "multiple Molotovs" were thrown. Then they claimed that one water bottle was thrown and said they would release body camera footage of the "Molotovs". The video published by the police highlighted only a few water bottles and some of the police's spent tear gas rounds, none of which support the police claim that there were "Molotov cocktails". Watching a live stream of the police response, it looked like the police got "tired" or had their feelings hurt by having a few, empty, plastic water bottles thrown at them. This is bolstered by body camera footage identifying the water bottle being thrown has a timestamp nearly a half hour before the police violently confronted protesters. Watching police officers attacking citizens after having their feelings hurt made me feel ashamed to call Milwaukee home.

The assertion that a "Molotov cocktail" was thrown in Milwaukee is a sham and a lie. It is inexcusable that the police released tear gas on people standing in our city streets in response. The police were well armored; the protesters appeared to be completely unarmed to the point that many were shirtless. It is unreasonable for the police to say that they were in danger or had any fear for their safety. If the police claim they feared for their lives, I can only interpret that as an effort to shirk responsibility. As a resident of the City of Milwaukee, I cannot accept that the city government condones the police attack on peaceful protesters or is willing to lie to excuse the police attacks.

Our police officers have to do better. The City has to do better. Mayor Barrett has to do better. The police have shown they cannot be trusted with heavy weapons and the only way forward is disarmament. The police officers who battered protesters must be fired and prosecuted. Beyond that, I defer to the inspirational black leaders and black protesters who have shared powerful ideas to fix police brutality and the scars on this City caused by racially-biased policing.

I am uncertain if any of these emails will be read out loud at the hearing, but I request that no portion of my email be read at hearing. As a white man, I am only a witness to the peaceful protests and the brutal police response to protesters exercising their constitutional rights. During this hearing, please listen to black and brown voices speaking on behalf of the community that has borne the brunt of police violence. I join my voice in calling for a change in the policing of this city rapidly and compassionately.

Thank you,

Ian Pomplin