A PROJECT UPDATE FROM ALICE GREEN

Just this past Friday on Juneteenth, the Center for Law and Justice posted its last round of letters to four government officials. As in previous rounds, these letters pose key questions regarding systemic racism and public safety in Albany. Because we have asked the officials to be responsive, thoughtful, and comprehensive in their answers, the Center has given them a full month to respond. You can read Police Chief Eric Hawkins Final Letter here; Common Council President Corey Ellis’ Final Letter is here; Mayor Kathy Sheehan’s Final Letter is here; and District Attorney David Soares’ Final Letter is here. Their responses will be posted during the week of July 20th.

These question-and-answer exchanges with the four officials will help set the stage for an October symposium to be jointly hosted by the Center for Law and Justice and the New York State Writers Institute. When we began these exchanges in early April, the title we gave the symposium was Albany’s “Recommitment to Community Policing.” But since George Floyd’s murder on May 25th, the entire nation has called out for transformative change in state and municipal policing practices.

Albany took the first step toward transforming public safety in Albany with compelling community demonstrations in May and June. Government officials heard our voices and important changes have already been made, but much more remains to be done. With Governor Cuomo’s mandate that every locality produce a plan that “reinvents and modernizes police strategies and programs” as a backdrop, the October symposium must go far beyond a recommitment to community policing in Albany; a new title is in the works.

Between today and the posting of the four officials’ responses in July, each Friday the Center will post a commentary on a topic related to transformative change in public safety in Albany. We have already posted “A Brief History of Community Policing in Albany,” “The Last Half Century of Systemic Racism in Albany,” and “The Albany Police Community Review Board: Two Decades of Official Neglect.” This Friday the Center will post “The Albany Community Policing Advisory Committee: What Is Its Role?”

As always, the Center invites comments from the public --- you can email us here.