Here are Mayor Sheehan’s unedited responses to the Center’s June 19, 2020 letter:

1. “Systemic racism” is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Systemic racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic, and political systems in which we all exist.

Do you agree that the definition of “systemic racism” above is an appropriate basis for our work? Would you like to suggest any modifications?

I agree that the definition of “systemic racism” above is an appropriate basis for our work.

2. In previous exchanges (prior to George Floyd’s murder) regarding how systemic racism affects the operations of the Albany Police Department, Chief Hawkins responded that the APD’s systems are as progressive as any in the country, and that its practices are aligned with nationally recognized best practices. He also agreed with the Center that even though that statement may be true, structural racism may still affect the operations of the APD.

It is clear from protests and uprisings across the country, including here in Albany after George Floyd’s murder, that “nationally recognized best practices” are not working to protect black and brown lives in America – in Albany. What changes do you believe need to be made within the Albany Police Department to combat systemic racism?

I believe the City’s Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative will help create a space for an in-depth conversation to be had where the community can be part of the process of proposing potential policing reform, including those designed to combat systemic racism.

3. Mayor Sheehan, in your first response to the Center, speaking of the tragic death of Dontay Ivy at the hands of the APD in April 2015, you said, “Then-Police Chief Brendan Cox made a commitment to sharing evidence with the Ivy family and openly sharing information with the community because he understood the importance of transparency and communication.” Will you now commit to a “date certain” by which the requested “First Street Incident” report will be provided?

The City has provided a copy of the aforementioned “First Street Incident” report.
4. Will you commit to requiring that all new or revised APD policies be accompanied by a racial impact analysis?

I believe the City’s Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative will help create a space for an in-depth conversation to be had where the community can be part of the process of proposing potential policing reforms, including the potential creation of a system where all new or revised APD policies be accompanied by a racial impact analysis.