Summary of Common Council President Ellis’ Responses to Questions Posed in CFLJ’s April 27, 2020 Letter

Questions posed to Common Council President Ellis are here categorized into five areas: THE PROBLEM of structural racism and public safety in Albany; THE PARTICIPANTS who should be involved in addressing the problem; ACCOUNTABILITY; TRANSPARENCY; and ADVOCACY.

The Problem

In your initial response to the Center’s question, “Do you believe structural racism affects the operations of the Albany Police Department?,” you responded that you do not know if structural racism exists in the Albany Police Department (APD), and that you have not received any information or complaints from any officer within the Albany Police Department around structural racism.

1. Are you aware of any complaints of racism in the APD from private citizens?
   
   Common Council President Ellis responded that yes, he is aware of information that has been made public.

The Participants

To date, the Center has been conducting this “work-in-progress” discussion with the Police Chief, the Mayor, the District Attorney, and the Common Council President.

2. Are there any others that you believe need to be included in the conversation?

   Common Council President Ellis responded that he is sure there should be others, though he cannot think of anyone at the moment.

Accountability

In the Center’s April 7 letter to you, we asked if you would include in ACPAC’s bylaws a requirement that all APD policies must be subject to ACPAC review. You responded that the ACPAC board is governed by its members, and that any changes to their bylaws should come from its members.

3. Would you be willing to suggest to an ACPAC member who is appointed by a Common Council member, that he/she initiate changes to ACPAC bylaws? If not, why not?

   Common Council President Ellis responded that, after talking to his ACPAC appointment, he would say yes, changes should be made to ACPAC bylaws.
Transparency

In the Center’s April 7 letter to you, we asked if you would encourage ACPAC to require annual data reports for the APD as a whole, and annual data reports for the LEAD program. You responded that the ACPAC board should request the required data they feel is necessary from the APD, and that LEAD data should be given to ACPAC because components of the LEAD program address community policing.

4. If LEAD data are not currently being provided to ACPAC, would you be willing to suggest to an ACPAC member who is appointed by a Common Council member, that he/she ask for that data?

Common Council President Ellis responded that he has already asked his ACPAC member to request LEAD data to date.

Advocacy

In the Center’s April 7 letter to you, we asked if you are willing to have the Common Council pass a resolution stating the need for repeal of Civil Rights Law 50-A. You responded that you have spoken to the Chair of the Public Safety Committee, who is willing to have a Public Safety Committee meeting to discuss and inform council members about the state legislation on Civil Rights Law 50-A.

5. If community consensus is reached at the fall “Recommitment to Community Policing” Symposium that a reexamination of Civil Rights Law 50-A is in order, would you support the community in urging that the law be modified?

Common Council President Ellis responded that yes, he would.