

For Immediate Release: 8/18/2020

Triad Abolition Project regarding Winston-Salem City Council and WSPD

Note: Appendix to this Press Release Includes Quotes from City Council Public Comments

Occupy WSNC is on Day 35 of our occupation demanding justice for John Neville and our brothers, sisters, and siblings. We will not cease to demand that the prone restraint be banned in *all* facets of local law enforcement and that they notify the public of any law enforcement involved deaths *immediately*. We make these demands to prevent the needless and careless deaths of our community members victimized by our carceral system. We find it abhorrent and gravely concerning that our local officials do not find these demands reasonable enough to have met them, especially after 35 days of their constituents occupying space downtown and after 55 of our comrades have been arrested by the WSPD for peacefully protesting in support of these not only reasonable but life-affirming demands. We will continue to seek transparency and accountability from our officials, no matter their office.

City Council Meeting, 8/17

Surveillance (Justice Assistance Grant)

The City of Winston-Salem has entered into an agreement to accept the Justice Assistance Grant for a Real-Time Crime Center, and further surveillance via access to private and public cameras (over 300 of which will come from this grant). No description of the private camera access was given, nor questioned by City Council representatives. Triad Abolition Project is firmly against the use of the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG), which is interlocally shared between WSPD and FCSO, and supported by the Winston-Salem Police Foundation. JAGs are from the Department of Justice, and require that data from WSPD and FCSO be reported to the federal government; thus, this increased surveillance is *not* only in effect for our city, but in effect for further surveillance from resources beyond our local community. Triad Abolition Project also admonishes the City of Winston-Salem for limiting public feedback to the point of complete silence of community voices by not granting a public hearing or public comment period for an item that indeed uses our tax dollars for a budget that increases WSPD and FCSO's workforce and policing service.

Over \$2 million to WSPD Vehicles

The City of Winston-Salem unanimously supported using over \$2 million dollars of the Public Safety budget for WSPD pursuit vehicle replacements. WSPD and City Managers requested the replacement due to service payments and age of the current vehicles; however, this purchase order is for 62 Ford Interceptors, all SUVs. Garage service fees for WSPD amounted to \$1,073,761.75 and fuel costs for WSPD vehicles amounted to \$895,767.23 in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Based on the Police Vehicle Memo received by City Managers on July 15th, the total lifetime cost per Ford Interceptor is \$62,903 (including the estimated costs of maintenance, fuel, and purchase by 120,000 miles). In the Vehicle Replacement Information, none of the WSPD Crown Victorias nor Chevrolet Caprices amount to or over \$62,903. 24 of the 62 vehicles being replaced are still under 100,000 miles, meaning they do not meet the criteria

for replacement. If the WSPD maintained these 24 vehicles, this would save \$790,704 that could be more useful elsewhere for the Winston-Salem community. However, the Memo states that the reasoning behind this new purchase order is that “The Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) has the need to purchase 62 police pursuit vehicles, intended as scheduled replacements for vehicles with high mileage, excessive maintenance and repair costs, and meet Fleet Services replacement criteria.”

Again, Triad Abolition Project and supporters admonish the City of Winston-Salem for denying the public a hearing or option for comments before this vote took place. As was made clear by Council Member Robert Clark in the City Council meeting on 8/17, our nation and city are facing “the worst recession in 90 years”; the public deserves a voice in addressing all budgetary matters, especially with how it applies to keeping our community truly safe and secure— *not* by further policing, but by emphasis on care, public needs, and resources.

Drug Task Force

In reference to Item C-7 on the Consent Agenda, City Council should *not* have moved forward with expanding the Drug Task Force with the Interlocal Agreement Between the City of Winston-Salem, the County of Forsyth and the Town of Kernersville. This expansion of the Drug Task Force does not mean that “crime” will decrease; it simply means that policing will increase.

Furthermore, crimes that involve drug possession are directly tied to the predatory War on Drugs, which was designed to severely increase policing and mass incarceration across the nation and disproportionately affected Black and Brown communities. This Interlocal Agreement will no doubt increase the quantity of incarcerated persons in our community.

Triad Abolition Project believes that Council Member John Larson (South Ward) should publicly apologize to the community for laughing as he said, on 8/10, that the location of the new Drug Task Force warehouse, where supposedly confiscated drugs and weapons will be stored in a 21,000 square foot facility, is “under a cloak of darkness” while congratulating WSPD for their coyness and planning. This is no laughing matter. During this time the community is publicly demonstrating and protesting against local and national police brutality, and our elected officials should feel absolutely beholden to what their constituents need and are asking of them. We need care and funding of that care; not a funded extension of the War on Drugs.

Covid Relief to be Spent on WSPD Raises Amidst WS Gun Violence Surge

Council Representative [Dan Besse](#), who is running for North Carolina House District 74, proposed using federal Covid Relief, amounting to a total of \$2.6 million, for a 1% pay increase for Public Safety. Wrongfully, Besse called for the [increase in police pay](#) based on their having “been under pressure because of the increase of gun violence and calls for racial justice,” adding that “we need to maintain our ability to recruit, train and retain” police employees. This pay increase is *not at all related to covid relief*, but is based on the City of Winston-Salem’s continued support for policing over community resources and care. According to Assistant City Manager Ben Rowe, the City has already used \$9.5 million from its reserves to balance the current year’s budget. The City of Winston-Salem is not only choosing to support further funding for WSPD out of a reaction to peaceful protests for racial justice, which they disguise as Covid

Relief, but the City of Winston-Salem is also being *reckless* with our economic well-being while continuing to hinder, when offering at all, a platform for community voices in these matters.

Council Representative Annette Scippio, who is running against write-in candidate [Michael Banner](#) for the East Ward seat this year, offered a resolution in support of the Winston-Salem police, which failed when Council Rep. James Taylor called for the resolution to be voiced in the Public Safety Committee before being moved to the full council. Scippio continues to argue that the increase in gun violence in Winston-Salem is an immediate concern, and thus the reasoning for voicing increased support for WSPD. Triad Abolition Project emphasizes that the increase in gun violence is not just a local concern, but a national one, and is a direct result of increased poverty in our city due to the Coronavirus. We must address the root cause of this deadly violence with increased funding for community care and resources. The increase in gun violence cannot be addressed by moving more funds and support to WSPD; in fact, this effort will *increase crime and violence*. We urge City Council to listen to the community as we continue to voice the need for support for our community needs, resources, and care.

Following the public comment period in which nine community voices adamantly spoke against City Council's decisions to extend further support to WSPD, Council Representative James Taylor made a statement on the prone restraint being banned by the City of Winston-Salem since 1995. While Triad Abolition Project appreciates this clarity for the public, we understand that the prone restraint is banned by the City. We wish for the City of Winston-Salem to adequately respond to Occupy WSNC being at Bailey Park for 35 days now; for the City of Winston-Salem to support our peaceful protests; for the City of Winston-Salem to recognize that *they* made 55 arrests of peaceful protesters in 21 days, but have not said anything about this to the public; for the City of Winston-Salem to encourage the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department to ban the prone restraint, especially since WSPD and FCSO are in multiple interlocal agreements (as exemplified by the shared Justice Assistance Grant and the Drug Task Force, which were both voted on in this very meeting in which City of Winston Salem continued to distance themselves from responsibility with FCSO); and for the City of Winston-Salem to be fully transparent and consistent when listening to community voices--to include public comments and hearings by request by the public.

We at Occupy WSNC have a call and response chant we frequently shout together in the streets:

"Am I my siblings' keeper?"

"YES I am my siblings' keeper!"

In their attempt to invalidate the concerns of nearly 10 people by pointing out that the prone restraint is banned within WSPD, the City Council once again shifted the responsibility to another entity-- usually the county, which is an entity City Council works with quite a lot (see nearly every item above). Though they took the time to invalidate the repeatedly voiced demand for a ban on the prone restraint, they did not address the other demand that the public be notified of any incarcerated or in-custody death nor any of the other public safety concerns voiced by residents. We ask City Council to cease this shirking of responsibility and to be their siblings' keeper. Stand up for what is right.

WSPD in Conjunction with FCSO on “Saturation Patrols in the City”

On the night of August 17th, FCSO pursued a vehicle on Patterson Avenue, which resulted in the vehicle crashing into a pole; one casualty of a juvenile occurred on the scene. We at Triad Abolition Project and Occupy WSNC are saddened by this loss of life, especially as it is so close to the location of our occupation, where we regularly witness patrol vehicles from both WSPD and FCSO.

We, as well as fellow local activists, have the following questions in relation to the WSPD and FCSO conjunction on saturation patrols in the city, as it relates to the vehicle accident and death of a juvenile: 1) Are there video footage, 911 calls, body cam footage, or audio tapes of the incident?, 2) Were there pit maneuvers, stop sticks, or other forces implemented?, 3) What time was the chase (10-43 code) initiated by FCSO?, 4) Was a lookout given for the vehicle prior to the incident? 5) Which entity first observed the vehicle and how many FCSO and WSPD vehicles and officers were involved? Were the vehicles marked or unmarked?, 6) Were any WSPD vehicles involved in the chase?, 7) What time was the chase terminated?, 8) What is FCSO policy on chases both in and out of city limits?, 9) When was Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough notified of the chase, accident, and death?, 10) Who is investigating the accident and death?, 11) Where are the vehicles involved?, 12) Did the chase have anything to do with the Occupy WSNC area?, 13) Where and when were Forsyth County Commissioners notified of the accident and death?, 14) How do they know if the vehicle was traveling at 80mph if no one was following or pursuing the vehicle? 15) Why was a saturation patrol, a tactic used in the event of riots, even in effect in this area on a Monday night, notably near the site of a 35 day peaceful occupation?

Public Comment Period

After listening to the public comment period, Council Representative Robert Clark offered support for adding public comment periods to committee meetings--detailing that a 10 minute public comment period at the beginning of the committee meetings would mean that comments could be considered before City Council votes. Triad Abolition Project urges City Council to fully consider the inclusion of public comment periods, and especially public hearings, for all City Council meetings. We especially encourage the City of Winston-Salem to offer public hearing and comments whenever requested by the public. Triad Abolition Project will continue to offer dialogue with the City of Winston-Salem on expanding the space for community voices in matters that directly impact the community's safety and resources.

Day 38 Collaborative Programming at Occupy the Block (Use-of-Force Policy and Policing)

On Day 38, Friday, 8/21, Occupy the Block will host the third installment of “Breaking Down Systems of Inequality in Winston-Salem,” which will have a theme of “Use-of-Force Policy and Policing,” and include speakers from: ACLU-NC, Emancipate NC, Forsyth Freedom Federation, NCSPAN (North Carolina Statewide Police Accountability Network), and more. The event will begin at 6:30pm, and dinner will be provided by Delicious by Shereen at 6pm.

Our Demands

Organizers intend to maintain the occupation until our demands are met. Those demands are as follows:

- Ban the use of the prone restraint (hogtie) on ANY civilian, incarcerated or not, sick or not). Make relevant policy changes in the FCDC around protocol for inmates in medical distress.
- Notify the public of any death involving an officer or deputy immediately. Make relevant policy changes around transparency and accountability in deaths of citizens in custody of the county (including in FCDC and other guardianship situations).

For further information, please see @TriadAbolitionProject on Instagram. All press release documents can be found at www.triadabolitionproject.org.

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Appendix

Quotes from City Council Public Comment Period 8/17

On the JAG, Real-Time Crime Center, and Surveillance

- “In reference to Item G-1, I believe that City Council should dismiss the move for the interlocal agreement between WSPD and FCSO to share the 2020 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant. The State of North Carolina requires that the City and the County enter into an interlocal agreement for the sharing of the JAG Funds; however, budgets have been separated so that funding from WSPD covers items such as office chairs, color scanners, etc while the shared cost with FCSO is for surveillance cameras. To cover the full costs of the interlocal agreement for the Real-Time Crime Center, the Winston-Salem Police Foundation, the local non-profit that provides about a quarter of a million dollars of additional support to WSPD, has agreed to fulfill the remaining costs.”
- “City Council members, I wish for you to understand that the Winston-Salem Police Foundation is deeply tied to local commerce, policing, as well as legislature, but has minimal ties to the community for which you, City Council, supposedly represent. The Winston-Salem Police Foundation president is Barry Rountree, former WSPD police chief, and a financial supporter of the WSPF is Council Member Jeff MacIntosh.”
- “Furthermore, in a memorandum sent by Chief Thompson to City Council on August 13th, it is detailed that: “If the 2020 JAG grant funds are used to finance the real-time crime center project, **there is potential to augment the new security camera pilot program**. This pilot program, which allows law enforcement access to private security camera footage, could be enhanced by adding cameras in “blind spots,” or areas in the city identified by law enforcement as needing additional cameras to capture video.””
- “This plan to initiate a new security camera pilot program will not decrease crime– it will instead increase the funding we allocate to WSPD and it will increase the number of arrested and incarcerated persons in our community. It will not address the root causes of crime in our community– it will perpetuate crime in our community. It will not make our community safe– it will make our community members further fear and mistrust not only WSPD, but the City Council that continues to support and uphold the values and funding of the WSPD over the needs of the people.”

On Public Comments:

- “I believe that City Council should move to include public comment period openings in all Committee Meetings. On June 8th, the Public Safety Committee Meeting allowed public comments, which resulted in more discussion over the decision to find 1 million dollars to

reallocate from the general fund to community resources. However, on August 10th, no public comment period was granted during the Public Safety Committee Meeting, which continued discussions of the 1 million dollar reallocation.”

- “When the public inquired about the missing public comment period before the start of the Committee meetings on August 10th, they were met with varying responses in terms of reasoning, but overall the job response tone was negative and dismissive. In one instance, the City of Winston-Salem social media manager wrote, “There is always a public hearing during the budget process. However, regular committee meetings do not include a public hearing or public comment period. I understand that many people are engaging with city government where they haven’t before. That’s great! However, accusing us of dishonesty without making an effort to understand doesn’t help. Again, public comment will be part of next week’s meeting.””
- “Furthermore, as has been stated by Finance Committee Chair Robert Clark, “I think we will be revisiting the budget regularly because who in the heck knows what’s going on” (referring to the pandemic and economy) and “as the year progresses, we can always amend the budget” (quoted from the Finance Committee Budget Workshop on June 4, 2020). Henceforth, budgetary information has always been included in City Council meetings, and thus so should public hearings and/or public comments.”
- “Significantly, too, I believe that City Council should include Spanish translations of all City Council meetings in real time. This has not yet been done, but Mayor Allen Joines has had this issue brought to his attention, and so he is well aware. Without streaming the City Council meetings with a Spanish translation in real time, then we are not including our entire community, and this needs to be addressed as soon as possible.”

On \$2million for WSPD pursuit vehicles:

- “In reference to Item C-22 on the Consent Agenda, City Council should not move forward with the Resolution Awarding Purchase Order for Police Pursuit Vehicles from Asheville Ford, LLC for a total of \$2,042,670.60. City Council should spend more time reviewing this purchase order, and determine ways of reallocating Public Safety funds from WSPD to economic development, healthcare, housing, food scarcity, and other community-led and community-requested resources of care.”
- “This purchase order is for 62 Ford Interceptors, all SUVs. Garage service fees for WSPD amounted to \$1,073,761.75 and fuel costs for WSPD vehicles amounted to \$895,767.23 in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Based on the Police Vehicle Memo received by City Managers on July 15th, the total lifetime cost per Ford Interceptor is \$62,903 (including the estimated costs of maintenance, fuel, and purchase by 120,000 miles). In the Vehicle Replacement Information, none of the WSPD Crown Victorias nor Chevrolet

Caprices amount to or over \$62,903. 24 of the 62 vehicles being replaced are still under 100,000 miles, meaning they do not meet the criteria for replacement. If the WSPD maintained these 24 vehicles, this would save \$790,704. However, the Memo states that the reasoning behind this new purchase order is “The Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) has the need to purchase 62 police pursuit vehicles, intended as scheduled replacements for vehicles with high mileage, excessive maintenance and repair costs, and meet Fleet Services replacement criteria.””

- “I am a voter in Winston-Salem, and I am disappointed in the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Council’s Finance Committee, and City Council’s Public Safety Committee for not 1) offering time for public comments ahead of this meeting and 2) not exercising any reallocation of funds from Public Safety to community resources during this time of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Last week, the Public Safety Committee rightfully addressed the surge of gun violence in Winston-Salem. However, overfunding our police and underfunding our communities is gross negligence toward this urgent issue in our city.”
- “This purchase order contract should not be signed. More research, clarity, and transparency is owed to the public. City Council should include the voices of the public in this high cost decision. And, City Council should stop being ignorant to the fact that the community is on Day 34 of an occupation that directly addresses police brutality, and thus calls for the reallocation of funds from public safety to public health.”

On the Drug Task Force Interlocal Agreement between WSPD, FCSO, and Kernersville

- “In reference to Item C-7 on the Consent Agenda, I believe that City Council should not move forward with expanding the Drug Task Force with the Interlocal Agreement Between the City of Winston-Salem, the County of Forsyth and the Town of Kernersville. This expansion of the Drug Task Force does not mean that “crime” will decrease; it simply means that policing will increase.”
- “Furthermore, crimes that involve drug possession are directly tied to the flawed War on Drugs, which has severely increased policing and mass incarceration across the nation and disproportionately affected Black and Brown communities. This Interlocal Agreement will no doubt increase the quantity of incarcerated persons in our community.”
- “I believe that Council Member John Larson (South Ward) should publicly apologize to the community for laughing as he said that the location of the new Drug Task Force warehouse, where supposedly confiscated drugs and weapons will be stored in a 21,000 square foot facility, is “under a cloak of darkness” while congratulating WSPD for their coyness and planning. This is no laughing matter. During this time the community is publicly demonstrating and protesting against local and national police brutality our

elected officials should feel absolutely beholden to what their constituents are asking of them.”

- “City Council, as a voting person in Winston-Salem, I demand that you reallocate city funds to the community rather than to WSPD; I demand that you respond to and help facilitate the resolution of Triad Abolition Project and Occupy WSNC’s demands--ban the prone restraint and immediately notify the public of all jail and custody deaths; I demand that City Council seek justice for John Elliott Neville, Ella Crawley, Elizabeth Pruitt, as well as our other incarcerated siblings. Thank you”

On Justice for John Neville

- “In December of 2019, our brother, John Elliott Neville, while in medical distress and in need of compassionate care, was placed in the prone restraint by five detention officers at the Forsyth County jail, which in turn caused him to asphyxiate and die due to serious bodily injury! This is a travesty. It was seven months later that the news of our brother's death was finally reported to the public. Right here in our own community, the circumstances surrounding the murder of Mr. Neville is being blatantly covered up, which in turn has led to Triad Abolition Project's 34-day civil disobedience occupation of Bailey Park in downtown Winston-Salem, as we demand justice and change! This occupation has been met with widespread community support, including statewide and nationwide.”
- “The Winston Salem police department is not innocent when it comes to the use of excessive force resulting in the deaths of our brothers and sisters. In 1992, [Sheila Epps McKellar](#) died after Winston-Salem police officers placed her in the prone restraint in a holding cell, and subsequently all officers were cleared of criminal charges. In 2016, [Travis Nevelle Page](#) died after Winston-Salem police officers restrained him while he was in medical distress; all officers were again cleared of any wrongdoing.”
- “To date, none of our City Council members have adequately responded to our occupation of Bailey Park, nor the policy demands that have been put forth, and those policy demands are the complete banning of the prone restraint by Winston Salem police officers and forsyth county sheriff's department, and the public notification of all deaths that occur within the Forsyth county jail. The demand to ban the prone restraint has been co-signed by ACLU-NC, the Winston-Salem Urban League, Hate Out of Winston, candidate Kathy Manning, and the staff of the Winston-Salem Journal, and many more.”
- “Let it not go unmentioned, that while peacefully protesting and calling for justice for Mr. Neville, 55 peaceful demonstrators have been arrested by the Winston-Salem Police Department; yet Chief Thompson’s only statement on these arrests has been in the form of an interview with WXII, in which she stated that, and I quote “I have experienced

racism and injustice, but in our world we are taught that this is the expectation and you have to learn how to live with it.””

- “Mayor Joines, mayor pro tem Adams, and members of the council, there is a Civil Rights Movement happening just blocks away from you, and rather than listen to the community that you represent, you are instead using your elected power to increase funding to WSPD, you are using your platform to praise WSPD, and you even laugh on public air while discussing the expansion of the Drug Task Force to a location, and I quote “under a cloak of darkness.” You erroneously compare the rise in gun violence to the need for expanded public safety, when in fact the rise in gun violence is a nationwide phenomenon connected to a severe lack of compassionate community care.”