



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Richard C. David, Mayor
Jared M. Kraham, Deputy
Donna Ferranti, Secretary

September 25, 2018

Susan Seibold-Simpson
Board of Directors, President
YWCA
80 Hawley St.
Binghamton, NY 13901

RE: YWCA Statement Regarding Binghamton Police Department

President Seibold-Simpson:

I'm writing to you, as President of the Board of Directors of the YWCA of Binghamton & Broome County, to voice my serious concern regarding a statement posted on social media by the YWCA regarding the police response to an incident that occurred at the YWCA downtown facility on September 8.

Specifically, the YWCA made the following public statements to our community: "calling the police on a black woman with a child was a dangerous mistake," "officers were noticeably more aggressive with individuals of color," "It was blatant racism and brutality on the part of the BPD officers," and "The racism and violence exhibited by the police should never have occurred."

Those statements are completely false and contradict the evidence at hand. They — in no way, shape or form — represent the values or ideals of the men and women of the City of Binghamton Police Department. Posting the statement, given the absence of evidence, was unacceptable and irresponsible.

As you may know, an investigation by the Binghamton Police Department's Office of Internal Affairs concluded this complaint was without merit. I personally reviewed the body-worn camera footage and two surveillance videos from the YWCA, and agreed that police responded appropriately and professionally. Since the complaint were directed to a department within City Hall, I also fully supported an outside review.

The Broome County District Attorney's Office conducted an independent investigation of the alleged incident. The office also reviewed police body camera videos and YWCA videos, and spoke to multiple witnesses. The determination by the Broome County District Attorney's Office was, again, that police responded appropriately and professionally. Based on video evidence, District Attorney Steve Cornwell added in a public statement: "You would have to be from another planet to come up with any other conclusion."

Across the nation, in cities large and small, there are very real, very important issues and discussions regarding the police and the communities they serve. I support those discussions. City Hall is committed to doing everything possible to foster positive relationships and, ultimately, better serve and protect residents.

I'm sure you would agree that false allegations of wrongdoing only hurt any progress in this area. They also detract from the very serious incidents, in other parts of the country, in which police officers acted wrongfully and had to be held accountable.

My understanding is that Carole Coppens, Executive Director of the YWCA, and a board member have had an opportunity to meet with District Attorney Cornwell and review video evidence that directly contradicts the YWCA's statement.

I am requesting the YWCA retract its statement and issue a public apology to the women and men of the Binghamton Police Department. A failure to retract the statement or respond creates the perception that the Board supports these false and malicious statements.

The leadership position of the YWCA has been seriously compromised, but I believe it's ultimately up to you and the Board of Directors to determine whether additional actions are necessary in the wake of that statement being posted. People make mistakes and can learn from them, but there must also be accountability.

Board members should immediately intervene with a statement or take some type of action to provide closure to this unfortunate situation and reassure those they serve — and the broader community — that when police assistance is needed, it will be sought. YWCA leaders were very quick to post false allegations, but now that all the information has come to light, the organization's silence is deafening.

I respectfully ask for a response to my letter as soon as possible. Despite hurtful and false allegations by an individual, as an institution, the YWCA remains a tremendous asset in the City of Binghamton. Its mission to “eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families, and strengthen communities” is a noble one we all should – and do – support.

I remain committed to working with the YWCA on achieving this mission. Please feel free to contact me at (607) 772-7001 if you would like to meet to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard C. David

Mayor

cc YWCA Board Members
Carole Coppens, Executive Director