

Remarks by Cambridge City Manager Louis A. DePasquale at Memorial Vigil for George Floyd 6-1-20

Good Evening, As we gather to share our grief and express our outrage for the senseless killing of George Floyd, it is difficult for me, like so many, to not have the Cambridge community physically present to support each other. As a community, I know we share the belief that the responsible individuals must be held fully accountable, and I support and encourage a full criminal investigation.

Since becoming City Manager, I have said far too often at vigils that we must never be here again. And yet, over and over, we gather as a community and as a nation to mourn individuals whose lives were stolen as a result of police brutality, excessive force, or racial profiling. We have a moral obligation as City leaders, as residents, and as individuals to actively pursue the elimination of the structural racism that perpetuates these acts of violence against people of color.

I want to thank Mayor Siddiqui for bringing us together virtually to remember George Floyd. I want to acknowledge the Mayor, Brian Corr, Pastor Lorraine Thornhill, City Councillor and former Mayor E. Denise Simmons, Commissioner Bard, Superintendent Christine Elow, and Bishop Brian Greene for being here and for their unwavering leadership, guidance, and dedication to our community. I want to thank each of you, the City Council, our faith leaders, and all the Cantabrigians who are working to support the community – especially our black communities who are rightfully hurting and angry.

We must work together to break the cycle of brutality and inequity that unjustly targets our black communities. As a white man, I recognize and acknowledge that black and brown members of our city live a different experience than white members of our city, and it pains me to know that there is racism and bias in our community and our nation. We must work to end the historical barriers that disproportionately impact our minority communities. The only way we can meaningfully begin this change is through action.

As a City we take this work very seriously, and I am proud of the work that our departments have been engaged in to address racism and inequity. Our Police Department is often on the forefront of law enforcement efforts.

They conduct Trauma-Informed Training, Anti-Bias Training, and undergo regular training on de-escalation techniques, mental health, diversity and inclusion, fair and impartial policing, and police legitimacy. Commissioner Bard has also created a Procedural Justice Unit---- But there is more to do.

Our Department of Human Services has a Race and Equity Initiative which in part focuses on understanding and addressing institutional racism and working to address racism at the individual and interpersonal level ---- but there is more to do.

I have set leadership expectations on equity and inclusion for City leaders to ensure we have the best workplace for all employees, and we can provide the best service to all residents. We have been actively engaged in learning opportunities and real-world practices to ensure we have the skills needed to live up to our expectations and core beliefs--- and yet there is still more to do.

These are just the tip of the iceberg on what City Government is doing to be a part of the solution. To eradicate the historic injustices and systemic racism against black Americans, we need action – not words.

To George Floyd’s family, friends, and community, I do not have words to adequately express my sorrow and my condolences. No person, no family, and no community should have to endure the suffering that you are going through. All I can do is personally pledge to be a part of the solution, and pledge as City Manager, to provide the resources our City needs to continue the difficult journey to eliminate racism and inequity in our community.