

John Long

From: Jane Kelly <jane.c.kelly@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 07, 2019 1:28 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk Contact; Mayor; Jesse Clingan; Katjana Ballantyne; Matthew McLaughlin; Stephanie Hirsch; Wilfred Mbah; Mary Jo. Rossetti; William A. White; JT Scott; Ben Ewen-Campen; Mark Niedergang; Lance Davis
Subject: SPD's role in the "Straight Pride Parade" 8/31/19

To the Chair of the Public Health and Public Safety Committee, The Somerville City Council, The Mayor of Somerville, and the Somerville Chief of Police,

I write to you in alarm and outrage. On Saturday, August 31st, the City of Boston played host to the so-called "Straight Pride Parade", which was a thinly-veiled white supremacist action organized by known fascists and homophobes. At the event, police officers used unprovoked force and chemical weapons on unarmed, peaceful civilians. Somerville Police were documented on camera participating in abuse of police power and intimidating marginalized members of our community. Our Police Department deliberately compromised public health and public safety, which is why I bring this matter before you along with over 115 other residents who have signed onto this letter elsewhere.

Provocation by white supremacists is a well-documented tactic. Police are the tool they use to escalate this provocation to violence and achieve their goal of intimidation. The playbook is this: a small group of fascist agitators provoke their targets (in this case, LGBTQ+ people and their allies) while marshaling a large police force as "protection". The police use any excuse (crowd size, chanting, walking in the street) to escalate, beat, detain, spray, or otherwise infringe on the civil rights of counter-demonstrators. In no case do police turn on the agitators, who are the cause of the disturbance. This is why the tactic works, has worked historically, and seems to have worked in the case of the Straight Pride Parade.

If Somerville Police are unaware of this tactic, this betrays poor training and leadership. They shouldn't be - the past century provides a wealth of examples. We will be happy to provide the history lesson. Or are they aware of it? Did Somerville Police officers participate knowing they would have the opportunity to abuse counter-demonstrators without consequence?

Why were Somerville Police present at this event in Boston? Were they present in Boston pursuant to a NEMLEC request? If so, their presence was authorized personally by Somerville Chief of Police. If that is the case, the public deserves a full accounting from Chief David Fallon. How could he use such poor judgment as to dispatch our own officers to protect fascists and beat us? How will the officers who participated in this violation of civil liberty be held accountable?

As a Somerville resident, I call upon you to officially censure the officers involved in the Straight Pride Parade for contributing to a culture of fear and bringing dishonor upon our city. We demand a formal inquiry into the degree to which white supremacists and fascists have infiltrated our Police Department. Furthermore, we request a public hearing at which victims of police violence can testify before the Council, the Mayor, and the Chief of Police. Until this matter of public health and safety is resolved we demand a moratorium on NEMLEC "mutual aid" to neighboring police departments.

Sincerely,
Jane Kelly
Somerville Ward 5