



**For Immediate Release**  
**Friday, October 30, 2020**

**BEDMINSTER** - On behalf of Bedminster Township, I want to thank Chief Karl Rock and the entire Bedminster Police Department for maintaining a safe environment at the "Free Speech" zone at the corner of Lamington Road and Route 206. Over these last four years, Chief Rock has coordinated with both Trump protestors and Trump supporters to establish basic ground rules for conduct and assigned police officers to make sure that confrontations were avoided and protests remained peaceful.

These last several months have been particularly stressful with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, losing our very own Patrol Sergeant AlTerek Patterson to that horrible disease, the protests following George Floyd's death, the anonymous online threats to "burn Bedminster to the ground", all of this with the backdrop of a looming presidential election and our small town taking center stage. The Bedminster Police demonstrated complete professionalism supporting the First Amendment's right of **"the people to peaceably assemble"** while at the same time protecting our residents, our businesses, and their property from threats and also making sure that the protestors were safe at their gatherings.

Earlier this afternoon, *The Bernardsville News* ran an article that included quotations from anonymous Biden supporters complaining about being harassed and intimidated by Trump supporters at the Free Speech zone last weekend. The Bedminster Police made sure that Biden supporters and Trump supporters were separated, and were both provided the opportunity to exercise their free speech rights. I will note that free speech is not one-directional and the right to peaceably assemble does not guarantee civility or confer sole possession of a protest zone. If those were the expectations of either group, then those expectations are misplaced and correcting that is not the role of Bedminster Township or our Police Department.

The anonymous quotations in the article suggest that the Police Department was acting one-sided and having a "chummy relationship" with the Trump supporters resulting in an unsafe environment. I find those suggestions at odds with the following text messages sent to Chief Rock by the actual organizers of the Trump protest and Biden supporters:

*I want to compliment your entire force today. We all felt very safe in tight quarters and high emotions. Your sergeant made it a real teaching moment for me. She deserves a lot of credit for having to deal with me before breakfast. We will be keeping the baby packed up next weekend. Be well.*

And,  
*Hi Chief- This is XXXXX XXXXXXXX. I wanted to thank you for assigning so many officers to the rally(s) on Sunday. It was not the best 4 hours of my life, but without a doubt, things would have been far worse if they weren't there.*

Despite the allegations in the article, I do not see any indication in these texts that our Police were one-sided or in any way contributed to emboldening incivility, harassment or intimidation.

We hope that within the next week or shortly thereafter, we will know the outcome of the 2020 Presidential election. No matter the outcome, one group will be pleased and the other will be disappointed. Such is the nature of elections. With this election cycle coming to a close, we hope this last weekend will continue to be safe for all the participants at the Free Speech zone, for our residents and for our Police Department.

We continue to put our trust in the Bedminster Police Department. They are consummate professionals who enforce our laws fairly and impartially.

Larry Jacobs  
Mayor