

Email interview with Council Member Tasha Diaz (Dist 3)

In connection with an upcoming article in the Park Hill Reporter, the publication of the Park Hill (Yonkers) Residents Association, we put some questions to Council Member Diaz, and she was generous enough to respond. Below is the full exchange, edited slightly for formatting and proofreading.

What was your main reason for proposing the increase in the noise limits?

The noise ordinance was changed because the ordinance that existed was outdated. We now reside in the third largest city in the state, meaning there are more people, and there will be an uptick in noise due to density and the increase in population.

Have you done any research on the health impact of increased noise levels? Did that information factor into your thinking on the issue?

Before this ordinance was implemented, yes, there was research done on this. We in the city of Yonkers do our research before we implement changes that can affect the entire city. There was a decibel reader that was brought into different areas throughout my research.

Have you done any research on noise ordinances in other cities in the tri-state area or in the US?

I reside in the city of Yonkers, the city that I represent, so as far as doing research in other cities, no. I researched Yonkers, the city I represent and reside in, for that is the city I was elected to implement change in.

To what extent did you speak with your constituents about the issue?

I actually did speak with a couple of constituents. Some community members are the individuals that actually brought this matter to my attention as it relates to noise. Some individuals were being harassed by neighbors because they wanted to/or celebrated, whether it was in their homes or in their apartments, because the neighbor next door would hear somewhat of their celebration and immediately call the police, when in fact, it was not a loud gathering. It could be kids playing, people in their pools, people listening to music, etc.

Some people tend to speak at a higher pitch, and often people mistake that for an argument or feel they talk too loud. With that being said, a gathering of five people that may talk loudly may seem like it's a rowdy crowd, or there's engaging in an argument, but in fact, they just all talk at a high pitch, and in turn, the police are called for such calls. There was also a committee meeting held in the city of Yonkers, and the Yonkers Police Commissioner attended this meeting as well. This meeting was live-streamed as

all our other meetings are. This ordinance was also put on the Rules agenda, which is public knowledge, and it was also put on the council agenda, which again is public knowledge.

I actually did have different conversations with different constituents throughout the city of Yonkers. You may or may not know, I don't only represent one side of Yonkers, I also represent the north side of Yonkers as well. So, did I hold a meeting solely for Parkhill residents? No, I did not because this ordinance was not directed towards or solely for Parkhill residents. As I stated prior, there was a committee meeting held on this ordinance that was implemented almost two years ago.

There are many individuals that live in the city of Yonkers. They also own homes that would like to enjoy their homes without constantly being harassed or the police being called because they choose to gather. After Covid, we have seen an uptick in outdoor activities and outdoor gatherings in hopes to reduce the spread of germs. We live in different times and we have to adjust to the times. Individuals should be able to have gatherings in their homes where they pay their taxes and not be subjected to being harassed because they're having a gathering, and the neighbor feels that it is loud.

Far too often, the police are called to deal with noise complaints, and in most cases it's not loud. It just seems that way because some people talk at a higher pitch. Some people may mistake this for an argument, or something else, when it may just be them gathering and trying to have a good time on their property with family and friends.

Further comments

Don't get me wrong, quality of life issues matter, but to pull our police department away from issues that are far more important than a noise complaint isn't fair for the safety and well-being of the city.

In speaking with the police, far too often when these "noise complaints" are called into the city, it sometimes is neighbors feuding with each other for other reasons, and they use noise or other issues as a way to have the cops intervene.

As we all know, homes and buildings are close together. We are the third largest city. We have to change with the times. This ordinance was placed on the books almost two years ago. To date, there have not been any complaints pertaining to this implementation other than residents from the Parkhill area. Yes, of course, before this was implemented, we took all the necessary steps to ensure that this was implemented properly, as that is my job.

Since this ordinance has been changed, to my knowledge, there haven't been any complaints pertaining to an uptick in noise. I'm sorry that you are just noticing two years later that this has been implemented, but all the proper steps were taken as it pertains to this matter.