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Worcester Police Patrol Officers' Union New England Police Benevolent Association, Local 911



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Last week, former Worcester City Councilor Etel Haxhiaj was convicted of criminal assault and battery on a female Worcester Police officer. This verdict was not rendered by a judge acting alone, by a police union, or by any political entity. It was delivered by a jury of citizens, selected through the legal process, who found her guilty beyond a reasonable doubt after hearing the evidence presented in open court.

The integrity of that process matters.

It is therefore deeply troubling that Council Vice Chairman Khrystian King attended the two-day trial in support of the defendant rather than the victim, a dedicated public servant and member of the Worcester Police Department. Even more concerning, he submitted a letter to the court requesting leniency following the jury's guilty verdict. Elected officials are entitled to their views, but when those views consistently align against law enforcement officers who are victims of crime, it raises legitimate concerns about impartiality.

We were equally disturbed by comments made by newly elected District 2 Councilor Rob Bilotta, who stated publicly, "It's concerning to see the justice system be used as a political cudgel, to silence concerns surrounding WPD's response to the events on Eureka Street." That statement, since deleted, implies that a criminal prosecution and jury conviction were politically motivated rather than the result of due process. Such assertions undermine confidence in the judicial system and disregard the jury's role in evaluating facts and evidence. The fact that these city councilors seem to have no issue with a Worcester Police officer being assaulted is, to say it mildly, unacceptable.

The men and women of the Worcester Police Department, and law enforcement professionals across Massachusetts, face escalating dangers in the performance of their duties. In recent months alone, officers throughout the Commonwealth have been shot, seriously injured, and placed in life-threatening situations. Against that backdrop, minimizing or politicizing the assault of a police officer sends a damaging message, not only to officers, but to the broader community that relies on them for safety.

Councilor King immediately after the incident, labelled it a racial issue and an attack on black and brown people - his all too familiar race baiting refrain.

Attempts to frame this criminal conviction as a racial or political matter ignore the fundamental truth: this case was adjudicated in court, before a jury, based on evidence. The verdict speaks for itself. This group of anti-police activists of which these councillors appear to give comfort and support will never be satisfied with the job our officers do. Last year's WPD crime statistics should remind these so-called leaders of the consistently outstanding work done daily by our officers despite recruitment and retention issues.

NEPBA Local 911 calls on Councilor King to recuse himself from matters directly involving the Worcester Police Department. Public confidence in municipal group governance requires decision-makers who can approach police-related issues with objectivity and without demonstrated bias. When actions and public statements create the appearance of prejudice against law enforcement, recusal is the responsible course.

These activists and their supporters constantly whine that they are being bullied and silenced. Such could not be further from the truth, as they weaponize social media to attack our officers. While at the same time suppress all opposing views. Accountability through due process is not silencing, it is the rule of law.



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Those who demand accountability from police officers must also accept accountability when the legal system holds them responsible.

Councilor King likes to say he supports unions, which were in large part created to improve workplace safety. His actions are not consistent with his claims.

NEPBA Local 911 remains unwavering in its commitment to the safety and protection of the men and women we represent. We will continue to advocate forcefully for officers who put themselves at risk every day to protect the residents of Worcester.

We are confident that the overwhelming majority of citizens recognize the professionalism and sacrifice of their police officers. We thank them for their continued support, and we urge elected leaders to reflect that same commitment to fairness, safety, and the rule of law.

Sincerely,

Thomas Duffy II
President, NEPBA Local 911