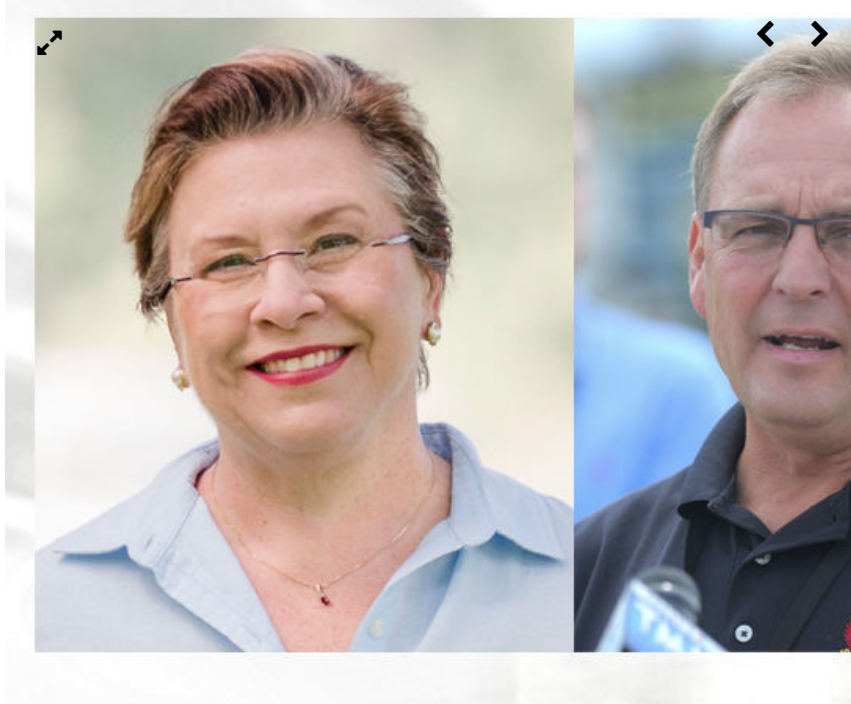


http://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/myers-residents-criticize-kenosha-county-sheriff-at-county-meeting/article_471ba109-71fa-5728-88b2-d884e1ba8b60.html

FEATURED

Myers, residents criticize Kenosha County Sheriff at county meeting

By BILL GUIDA bguida@kenoshanews.com 2 hrs ago



Democratic congressional candidate Cathy Myers, left, and Kenosha County Sheriff David

Cathy Myers added her voice Wednesday to those calling for David Beth to apologize or resign as Kenosha County sheriff for controversial remarks he made on Jan. 25.

Myers, of Janesville, is one of two Democrats seeking to challenge incumbent Republican Paul Ryan for the First Congressional District seat. She made her remarks during the citizens' comments portion of the County Board's Judiciary and Law Committee.

"He claimed that he was referring to young people of any race, but his racist dog whistles were deafening to me and a slap in the face to the African-American men and women who have been targeted and victimized by our justice system," Myers said.

Myers joined Diana and Mark McCarthy, Gwendolyn Skaggs and Bill Gregory, all of Kenosha, who took Beth to task for comments he made in a Jan. 25 news conference the day after a high-speed chase by deputies that led to the arrest of five alleged shoplifters.

Last week, Beth apologized for his comments but later appeared to walk back his apology in part. He accused a local minister and member of Congregations United to Serve Humanity of being pro-criminal for calling on him to apologize publicly and open a dialogue with the Kenosha community.

Chairperson disappointed

During the portion of the meeting for supervisors' and committee members' responses, none responded in Beth's behalf or reacted to the comments leveled against him.

However, in an interview afterward, Chairperson and Supervisor Leah Blough, who is Filipino, said as a woman and ethnic minority she was troubled by Beth's comments.

"I was pretty shocked by the comments I heard. It was disappointing," Blough said. "I really hope that he thinks about what people are saying and takes it to heart."

She said she understands deputies and police officers can face split-second decisions in the course of their duty. But she acknowledged Beth's news conference did not fit into that category.

"I've always supported the sheriff. This bothers me," Blough said. "As a minority, I wondered, 'Is this how you really feel?'"

Beth not in attendance

Beth did not attend Wednesday's meeting and normally only does so when he is there to explain budget issues. He previously has said he does not see any need to open a dialogue with the community.

At the Jan. 25 news conference, Beth said: "I think we have to create a threshold where, once you cross the threshold, Wisconsin, the United States, builds warehouses, where we put these people who have been deemed to be no longer an asset, that are really a detriment, like these five people.

“I have no issue with these five people completely disappearing. At (this) point, these people are no longer an asset to our community, and they just need to disappear.”

While initially stating he was “tired of being politically correct,” after meeting with members of the Kenosha NAACP last week, Beth issued a letter acknowledging his comments may have offended people.

“In the press conference, I should have kept my comments better directed toward the incident itself and not allowed my emotions to get the better of me at the time,” he wrote. “... my comments did not necessarily live up to even my own expectations for my office, and I again apologize.”

Expressing opinions

Myers, a veteran public school teacher and member of the Janesville school board, told the committee Wednesday she is “running for Congress to represent the people of Kenosha. So, I wanted to be here to listen and express my opinion about the sheriff’s comments.”

She said she agreed with Beth that the alleged shoplifters deserved “to be held accountable for their actions,” including fleeing police, crashing into another vehicle and injuring that vehicle’s occupants.

“But I disagree with just about every other word that came out of his mouth two weeks ago,” Myers said. “Sheriff Beth’s comments are so inexcusable that my silence and the silence of any elected official or candidate for office is a signal that institutional racism is acceptable.”

Diana McCarthy, who recently retired as a social worker after a 40-year career, told the committee she watched the video of Beth's Jan. 25 news conference.

"I was shocked and angered," she said, adding that she did not support Beth's comments.

"I believe in our legal system that people are innocent until proven guilty. I do not believe in warehousing people for the rest of their lives because I believe in rehabilitation. People can change," Diana said, noting that was the focus of her life's work.

Her husband, Mark, similarly lambasted Beth for the sheriff's Jan. 25 news conference and subsequent remarks, calling them "way out of line ... something you'd expect in Russia ... divisive ... appalling."

Bill Gregory said, "Sheriff Beth must be held accountable for his sick fantasy of 'cowboy justice. ... The sheriff has walked back his hollow apology and now stands by the language he used in his self-described 'rant.'"

"Sheriff Beth," Gregory added, "must come forth with a full-throated apology and renunciation of his words. His contrition must acknowledge an understanding that his language was dehumanizing and displayed an anti-black bias, and that, as such, is dangerously unacceptable."

Afterward, Blough said she hopes Beth will engage in a dialogue with CUSH and other groups.

"I think people are putting the pressure on him to do something," Blough said. "As an elected official, I can't mandate what he does or order his resignation. Only the voters have that power."

MORE INFORMATION



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