



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**July 6, 2021**

**A STATEMENT FROM MOUNT LAUREL MAYOR STEPHEN STEGLIK**

The events that have transpired in Mount Laurel have shed light upon larger systemic issues, throughout our state and country. As I have said before, the now widely seen footage involving Edward Matthews is disturbing and speaks to a larger hate-filled divide within our country.

When words are hurled that have deep-seeded meanings followed by someone physically disrespecting someone based on their race, this should be treated as more than a random altercation. That's why I am calling for a federal hate crime investigation into Matthews' actions and words caught on video. Matthews' behavior, both physically and verbally, shows an individual with a deep seeded anger and bigotry and this must be addressed.

Locally, we should do more to hear our residents. Last night as well as this morning, I had the opportunity to speak with residents of the Essex neighborhood and listen to their concerns and fears, not only involving Edward Matthews, but with the process that has seemingly failed them. Though I am limited in power, it does not limit my voice and desires for an improved, more inclusive community. That's why I am calling for the township council to establish a diversity & inclusion board made up of residents of Mount Laurel that will help improve our township's dialogue with communities directly.

In addition, I believe we need to further look at the bureaucratic challenges that block us from responding the way the public deserves and should expect. We must have accountability and transparency as to why the process to get Matthews in police custody was filled with loopholes that seemingly protected a known harasser at the expense of the safety of law-abiding residents.

When a judge ignores the pleas from local police to issue an arrest warrant the day of a widely reported incident despite a history of perpetual harassment, that is a problem within our system that only hampers our police from protecting our residents.

This moment can be a turning point for Mount Laurel and communities throughout the state. I will continue to work with our residents, faith and governmental leaders throughout Burlington County and the state to improve and better our community.