



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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October 28, 2018

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Fitzgerald Comments on Yesterday's Tragic Shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue

PITTSBURGH – The following comments are from County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, a resident of the City of Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood:

"As County Executive, the scope of my job requires my focus far beyond Squirrel Hill – my neighborhood. Living half a block from the Tree of Life Synagogue, the site of yesterday's horrific tragedy, I refocused my attention to home.

"My wife, Cathy, set out shortly before 10 AM for her usual walk. Some days I join her, but more often than not, I am headed to events in other parts of the county. As Cathy headed up Wilkins Avenue, about 50 yards from Tree of Life, she heard the unmistakable pop pop pop of gunshots. Watching a police officer jump out of his vehicle and crouch behind it, she knew something awful was happening and turned and sprinted home.

"I called my Chief of Staff, Jennifer Liptak, Mayor Peduto, and appropriate county personnel. I would not be traveling around the county today. On this particular Saturday, the only important neighborhood in this county was MY neighborhood, Squirrel Hill.

"With elected officials, including Governor Wolf, camped at the corner of Murray and Woodmont, I walked toward "command central." On the streets my wife walks every day. On the streets where my eight kids rode their bikes to hoops at the Jewish Community Center (JCC). Our Catholic family spent MANY Saturdays at the Tree of Life and other neighborhood synagogues at countless bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings, and other celebrations. This is why Cathy and I chose to raise our family here, in a place where different faiths and backgrounds all share common hopes and dreams.

"Standing in the rain last night at Forbes and Murray, in the heart of our neighborhood with thousands of our neighbors, I was overcome with so many emotions. Horror, grief, but also love and community. Journalists have been describing this place probably more eloquently than I am able. But what I CAN say is that Squirrel Hill is special. Thirty-five years ago, Cathy and I chose this neighborhood to build our life. We love this place. And even though my responsibilities take me away from here most days, this horrible tragedy reminds me why I live here. I am thankful and proud to call Squirrel Hill my home."

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