

Budget hearing #2 goes pretty smoothly

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Serious Issues November 16, 2019

 *8th in a series of posts on the 2020 Budget* 

2020 Proposed Budget

2nd-Budget-Hrg-11-13-19-Agenda

Gadfly's private life (yes, he has one!) unfortunately kept him from attending the second budget hearing as well as the first. So, again, he relies on the video archive just as you can.

Gadfly especially likes these budget hearings for the ability to hear from the City administrators and for the opportunity to hear some of the doings within their departments.

After all, these people — in their day-to-day, on-the-ground work — may have more to do with the quality of City life than some elected officials.

Gadfly likes to know who they are, have a sense of them.

Last hearing, for instance, we heard from admins Boscola and Alkhal. Mr. Boscola attends all the City Council hearings, but Gadfly doesn't believe he's ever had an occasion to speak. So hearing him was a treat. On the other hand, Mr. Alkhal is often called upon to answer some question or other in his diverse department.

At the mics for the second hearing were the familiar Chief DiLuzio, Chief Achey, and Business Manager Evans but also the unfamiliar Golf Course manager Larry Kelchner, who has been spoken of very highly. It was good to hear him.

Followers can see from the bullet points below that the questions from our Council inquisitors elicited answers on interesting topics. Gadfly invites you at the very least to choose a spot to browse the discussion for a while.

As at the first hearing — *except for a brief stretch that we'll consider in the next post* — the interchanges between Council and Administration were courteous and amicable. One could sense cooperation and respect.

Budget Hearing #2, November 13

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

[Part 4](#)

[Part 5](#)

Police Chief DiLuzio (parts 1 and 2):

- no big changes in the budget
- rise in overtime because they're down 20 officers; applications are down; "big issue is manpower"; overtime is controlled — 4hr shifts not 8
- good economy affects number of applications
- every patrol officer has a body camera
- current contract expires in 2022
- new vehicles Ford SUVs
- discussion of budgeting of special event overtime
- probable presidential candidate coming to the City in 2020
- we are probably in lower half of pay rates compared to other cities

- drugs, opioids — get calls every day — number stagnant but hasn't increased
- programs to keep kids off the streets?
- interaction with Health Department, for instance storm problems
- the BPAIR program: people voluntarily turning selves in for drug treatment
- diversity? work with NAACP, Hispanic organization, LGBTQ
- info on use of body cameras
- info on winter shelter: people sleeping outside, etc.
- Resource officers at Liberty: safety concerns? soft target
- Fentanyl? large caches for city our size, a lot of it out there
- marijuana enforcement

Fire Chief Achey (end of part 2, part 3)

- contract settled
- numbers of fires down: smoke alarm program
- new engines added
- down 2 firefighters, recruitment good
- meeting call volume, injuries at historic low
- drone program?
- our gas lines? risk of explosions?
- code for firewalls?
- hiring Latinos?
- EMS service calls static
- compression devices?

Golf Course: Eric Evans, Larry Kelchner (end of part 3, part 4 & 5)

- turnaround has been a success

- lots of positive feedback
- major projects: pavilion, irrigation system, trees, etc.
- rounds up 17% on course and up on driving range
- marketing partnership with St. Luke's at range — up 23%
- “dramatic changes operationally” paying off
- good work of part-timers
- involved in First Tee program
- environmentally friendly?
- bunker and cart path work
- bathrooms need to be “tuned up”
- fees not being raised
- discussion of kids' fees — why difference in rate?
- why not differential for kids at driving range?
- First Tee (housed in Boys Club) uses facility for free
- argument over whether kids are at the range
- Liberty, Freesom, Beca teams use for free
- host “Y,” Special Olympic, etc.
- \$5 at range instead of \$10?
- sticking it to kids on Golf range?
- St. Luke's partnership
- “uniforms” for staff
- relationship with restaurant owner: “fluid,” “contentious”