

# Rambling with the Gadfly (31) (2)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Communication survey, Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues October 8, 2018

*(31st in a series of posts on parking)*

*(2nd in a series on the communication survey)*

So, the “comment by area residents [on the parking meter increase] on social media sites was unfavorable overall.”

Let me ramble a bit meditating about that report from Dana in context of the upcoming City communication survey. And how the Gadfly is going to answer.

Social media. Facebook. Twitter. Blogs. Instagram. Snapchat. Etcetera. Gadfly is not a Luddite. Gadfly has used the new technology profitably professionally for pedagogical purposes. For instance, he gave you a link several posts back to his cluster of “History on Trial” web sites.

But he isn't one to follow the latest fads and hasn't seen the need for much of social media for either personal or professional use. His phone is plain and simple. Quaker-like.

Gadfly has 7 grandchildren in college spread all over the country who had never voted before the past primaries. He found Twitter useful this year in providing information, providing things to read and watch, providing things to think about, and urging them to vote in the primaries and now in the upcoming mid-terms. A good use of that technology.

The Mayor has a Twitter account, and Gadfly follows him. Do you? I wouldn't say it's a very active account. Should it be more active? (Ha! maybe not Trumpstyle active!) Gadfly doesn't believe the City has a separate account – should it?

After several months of stalking City government, Gadfly felt the need for people to talk more, interact more – and started this blog. “Blog” – a word to choke any person with a moderate literary sensibility. But the name can't be stuffed back into the bottle now. And it is a good technology for this purpose.

Facebook. Has never interested me. And Gadfly imagines Facebook is what Dana was patrolling. Facebook is actually a bit scary to me. Gadfly heard reliably reported that many people, especially young, now get their news from Facebook. Gadfly asked those grandchildren. Yes. True. That's scary. Without even considering that the Russians were manipulating the news, there is no "center" for authenticity or ethics on Facebook.

Some people assume this blog is like Facebook. What scares me about comments on Facebook about parking, for instance, is the probable lack of context. Maybe this is an unfair assumption. But Gadfly doesn't see there room or space for extended discussion or argument or informed opinion. What Gadfly will try to do here is frame an issue from all sides, making evaluation, analysis, opinion legitimately grounded in facts, evidence as much as possible.

I hope the unfavorable comment on social media about the parking increase is not just thoughtlessly aimed at a money-grab by greedy bureaucrats but thoughtfully aimed at the announced uses necessitating that extra money. That's where discussion needs to be.

Gadfly doesn't think the City has a Facebook page. Is he right? If not, should it?

Gadfly likes the idea of a full, robust City web site.

<https://www.bethlehem-pa.gov/> is a "virtual" City Hall. For me it's like physically going to Church Street. Gadfly likes the idea of this web site being the solid source of all that residents need to know. And that's why he pointed out the inconsistency of announcements there about something as important as parking rate increases.

Gadfly literally has his Monday calendar marked to check the City Hall web site announcements (though he inevitably looks there many more times than that in the courses of his gadflying) and Breena Holland's Google calendar of local events for the week. Works for me. Gadfly likes the idea of the City Hall announcement page as the official channel for news.

And – and this is easy for me to say who is so shy he adopts an insect disguise to verbally hide behind – Gadfly would feel better if the Mayor

were visible making announcements about what seems to me a largish issue like raising these parking rates. The Mayor sent a brief memo to BPA, is quoted a couple times in a *Morning Call* story, and ('cause he was under the weather) had the decision straightforwardly announced without explanation at City Council. Gadfly thinks the decision could use some beefier legs under it. And maybe convert some of those Facebookers. At least give them more to think about.

Don't leave out face-to-face communication.

So, quite a zig-zag ramble here. Any reactions to communication issues or your use of technology in anticipation of the survey coming? Or how communication happened in the parking rate process? Is there anything we can learn?