

Councilman Reynolds: “I do not have confidence that Mr. Callahan should continue as our liaison to the Parking Authority”

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Ethics December 6, 2019

 Latest in a series of posts on Ethics and City Government 

You are going to need a program again to understand the dates and the events cited in this chapter of the ethics discussion at City Council Tuesday night. Here goes. The Bethlehem Parking Authority requested input from the City on the proposals from two firms on the retail portion of the Polk Street Garage. The Mayor recused himself because his son works for one of the firms and appointed an ad hoc committee.

Aug 13: the committee interviewed the two firms

Aug 20: at City Council, Councilman Callahan (not a committee member) referenced info about the meeting before the committee circulated its report

Aug 22: the Committee circulated its report

Aug 28: the Bethlehem Parking Authority voted on the proposals

Nov 6: Councilman Callahan questioned AMK publicly at the City Council meeting about her actions contacting BPA Board members before the Aug 28 vote

Nov 25: The Mayor sends Council a 4-page memo refuting Councilman Callahan's charge of AMK's unethical behavior in the Parking Authority issue

<https://youtu.be/xpZZJbciGIQ>

Remember that in the last segment, Councilman Callahan not only did not apologize to AMK but moved the goalposts of the Parking Authority issue. In the beginning of this statement, Councilman Reynolds does not seem to take note of BGC's refocusing the specific nature of AMK's unethical act and assumes that the Mayor's memo to BGC has settled the issue. Which is wrong. But the real purpose of JWR here is to show that BGC is guilty of bad behavior. JWR accuses the accuser! He doesn't call BGC's actions in 1) advocating for the proposer for whom his brother works and 2) overstepping his role as Council liaison to the BPA "unethical," but, rather, he calls them "unequivocally inappropriate," and thus he moves that Council remove BGC from the liaison role.

Pretty slick for a statesman. Ha! JWR has the instincts of a Big-City ward politician.

JWR's purpose is to punish BGC.

What do you think of JWR for doing that? (BGC will later intimate that other Council members were compliant with JWR.)

How do you think Councilman Callahan is going to respond to JWR? Is he the kind of person to accept such a rebuke?

(Remember that Gadfly is going slow here so that you can think about how you feel about each actor in this ethics controversy at each step along the way.)

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- Mr. Callahan is the liaison from our body to the Parking Authority . . . he represents us.
- The winning proposal that was picked by the Parking Authority Board — that was not the recommended project of the Administration — includes one of [BGC's] family members. [BGC's brother, John Callahan, former Mayor of Bethlehem]
- As the Parking Authority liaison, [BGC] should not be having conversations with Board members about their decision,
- he should not be publicly advocating for including affordable housing or not,
- he should not have had any conversations with anyone on that ad hoc committee on August 13,
- he definitely should not be referencing those conversations publicly in order to advocate for an aspect of the project . . . before a vote.
- I don't think anybody could disagree that that behavior there is unequivocally inappropriate.
- Most importantly, it's all public.
- This is not about the merits of the Polk Street project . . . the administration thought there were positives to both.
- But he is our liaison to the Parking Authority. He is this body's representative.
- This [Polk Street] project is not over.
- I do not have confidence that Mr. Callahan should continue as our liaison to the Parking Authority.
- I feel that this has further damaged the connection between City Council and the Parking Authority.
- He's not the one that should be making that particular argument [that the City report was biased in favor of the low bidder] when a member of his family is involved.
- I think that this project is a great project that currently is in a shadow of Mr. Callahan's . . . his support of the project publicly.

to be continued . . .