

“The practice of using campaign funds breeds cronyism and is not in the interest of democracy” (70)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Serious Issues May 21, 2019

(70th in a series of posts on candidates for election)

Barbara Diamond enjoys retirement as Lehigh University Director of Foundation Relations by engaging in various activities and organizations hopefully for the betterment of the community. Her particular interests at the moment are preventing gun violence, local government ethics reform, and Bethlehem Democratic Committee work.

Dear Gadfly,

Since Ms Martin mentioned me personally [comment, post #58; see also post #68], I feel I must reply. The important difference in our contribution to a candidate is that our livelihood does not depend on securing largess from the city in the form of contracts, permits, licenses, tax abatement (TIF, CRIZ) and other benefits that can flow to those who seek to influence public officials. We are advocates for good government, were actively involved in a grassroots effort to establish common sense ethical guardrails that would protect Bethlehem from the devastating corruption experienced by Allentown. The practice of using campaign funds breeds cronyism and is not in the interest of democracy. What we want from our local government is to be independent of special interests and make decisions that benefit the city rather than special interests. This is admittedly not an easy task because of the very real effort by various entities to cultivate relationships with local officials for the purpose of influence; campaign contributions are a major way to do so. If

you want to know more about high standards in municipal ethics, please visit cityethics.org. As for being originally from Bethlehem or not, everyone should be in favor of good government and sound democratic practices whether one is from here or not.

Barbara

(Elise Martin, if you are reading this, your email doesn't work — would you please contact the Gadfly? Thanks.)