

Chewing on SBHS concerns: CW Negron's response (4)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Neighborhoods, Serious Issues, Southside June 10, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts on the Southside and Neighborhoods)

Council watchers know that Councilperson Negron rarely speaks at length.

When she does, it's time to listen-up.

One of those rare times was June 4 when she elaborated on and extrapolated on the South Bethlehem Historical Society letter.

Gadfly finds her emotional commentary very compelling, very revealing.

In fact, Gadfly finds the combination of the SBHS letter and CW Negron's response perhaps the most powerful eloquence he's heard in his 18 months of Council watching.

Gadfly laments that waning journalistic resources leave it to a blog to make sure that at least some small number of people outside Town Hall hear what was said.

You must listen or watch ([City video beginning at min. 1:48:40](#)). I suggest listening. Shut your eyes. Lean back. CW Negron has a wonderful, intimate radio voice. Leave the text soundbites below for review later.

AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE

- I felt that was my voice being repeated for some many years, even before I was on Council.
- I am not known for being a tree-hugger or a historical-building hugger.
- However, I was raised in a way by my parents in Puerto Rico that we have rules and the rules are there to follow, to follow by everyone.
- When it comes to historical areas, the City, the people, the government decided to have a historical area . . . and people got together and implemented rules different than the rest of the City.
- I would never chain myself to any building.
- I believe that there are rules, and that the rules are there to be followed by everyone.
- Again and again we have allowed . . . developers to break those same rules that others . . . have had to abide by.
- And that is wrong, and every time I complain about this, it was just about that.
- I lived in Southside Bethlehem for the last 23 years . . . everything happened on the Southside.
- Living in there every day and dealing with everything every day, it is not the same.
- And talking with neighbors and walking up and down the streets every day is not the same.
- Nobody can tell me otherwise.
- And I've seen the change . . . and it's sad.
- I had to plead with the historic board because we didn't have the money to fix [the Hispanic Center], and we were not supposed to tear down a historic building.
- It took a long time and a lot of begging for them to allow us to do something.
- But that is not what is happening now on the Southside, and it's outrageous, it's outrageous.

- If that is the direction we want to go, fine, change the rules so everybody follows the same.
- That was, has been my point.
- I was on the Board for Community Action for over 12 years, and I was part of setting the Southside vision . . . and did a lot of work. And I am very proud that I was part of it . . . sidewalks, acorn lights, the facades . . . I'm proud of that, and I'm glad.
- But there are a lot of changes that are causing people to not being able to afford living in there.
- We have ordinances to protect affordable housing . . . and we're not using them.
- We are allowing developers to build without keeping affordable housing, and individual, I deal with this every single day when I go to the Hispanic Center twice a week, and all I hear is that I cannot afford to pay my rent.
- It is sad when you hear individuals that are hard-working and they can not afford to do that, they cannot afford to pay their rent.
- And all we worry about is to build luxury apartments.
- And that is wrong.
- Especially when rules are broken.
- When individuals like me and you have had to abide by all those rules with the winds, with the color.
- And anybody with a lot of money can put a shiny object, and that is fine.
- And that is the piece that saddens, that saddens me driving around the Southside, and all I see is Campus Hill, to rent student rentals.
- Is not family-occupied any more.
- Why can't Lehigh figure that out?
- Why can we have to keep on changing our Southside . . . displacing families, not to be able to afford living there any more.

- Beautiful building has been built that my people cannot rent, that I cannot afford to rent.
- I couldn't afford to live in a place decent enough that I wanted to live at.
- I'm a Councilwoman, I work for a law firm – think about that for a minute.
- Our people can't afford it any more – that is wrong.
- Especially when it happens without us using the ordinance that we have on the books already that should force the developers to build affordable housing and that is allowing them to break so many of the ordinances in the historical area that other small businesses and homeowners have had to abide by.
- That has been my complaint.
- And that is why when I read the letter, it broke my heart.
- His plea: please, listen, where are we taking our city?
- Is that's what we want to do, is that the vision?
- Ok, but, then, don't call it historical. Don't. Forget about those rules. Same rules for everybody.
- And we'll have shiny buildings everywhere.
- And that is why when I read that letter, it really broke my heart.
- Because I heard his plea.
- His begging to say, please, do not give up what we have.
- I am not against re-development. I love what happened to the Steel, ArtsQuest, Sands . . .
- But we have an historical area, the rules should be abided by everybody, and we haven't done that.
- Please, let's think about where we want, we are taking our City.

Councilman Callahan responded. We'll consider his comments next. You know it's the Gadfly practice to lay out all the primary sources first so we

can begin to form our own opinions. Then we'll talk about what this now 3-way interchange means.