

The City could do better making citizen participation on the ABCs visible and inviting

The Bethlehem Gadfly Uncategorized June 27, 2020

 Latest post in a series on city government 

Carol Burns is a freelance marketer who works with several local organizations, both paid and volunteer. In addition to supporting WDIY, the Bethlehem Public Library, and local theatres, her “third place” is the Bethlehem Food Co-Op — she contributes her time to helping bring a full-service, community-owned grocery store to Bethlehem’s downtown.

Gadfly:

Out of curiosity I went to the city’s website to see if I could find info about getting involved in an advisory council or other board [one of the ABCs!] as a citizen. I poked around for awhile and not finding any obvious paths finally put “boards” in the search bar. This page came up: <https://www.bethlehem-pa.gov/City-Government/Authorities-Boards-and-Commissions>.

The page leads with: “For information regarding vacancies on Authorities, Boards, and Commissions on which you may be interested in serving, please e-mail or call the listed number.” And then lists 21 such groups.

Each one had a phone number, several had a website listing, and one had an email. A few listed their meeting times. Not one had a description of what they do — and without a website, you are left on your own to figure that out. Of course some are self-explanatory, like Bethlehem Area Public Library, but others are not clear — at least not to me.

It doesn’t seem particularly compelling nor welcoming, and I’m going to take a wild guess that specific openings are not publicized beyond a general “come on out and apply” message once or twice a year. A clear opportunity to do better!

Carol

Carol's post is quite apropos of the recent series of posts on the ABCs. We might need to think about that page on the City web site more as a recruiting opportunity than just providing factual information. And is it even right that interested people should be directed to the ABC head? And how about some sort of "advertising" of positions that are open? Thoughtful post, Carol.

to be continued . . .

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