

Campaign contributions: worrisome (53)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Serious Issues May 19, 2019

(53rd in the series on candidates for election)

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Gadfly:

WORRISOME—this is how I would describe the campaign contributions disclosures for Bethlehem City Council. (See Gadfly post #50.) For the most part, the results were what one would expect with the exception of this late 24 hour reported addition. Please see for yourself:

<https://www.bethlehem-pa.gov/citycouncil/candidates/2019/Carol%20Ritter%2024%20Hr%20Report%201.pdf>

What does it mean when a sitting council member “Friend” committee contributes \$4000 to a prospective member’s campaign? I have sat in on a number of Council meetings and have appreciated the debate among council members—their discussion points, arguments, data analyses, and sometimes barbs. But, the exchange of money, and this amount of money? Does this mean that there is some kind of indebtedness on the part of the recipient of the money to the donor? Is this a form of stacking the decks on the part of the donor? Is this a statement about the independence of the candidate seeking election?

So, what are the solutions? This is a new situation. In all the discussions that I have followed on the importance of ethics in government, this is

the first time I have heard of this type of problem in Bethlehem. Perhaps the donor and recipient have not thoroughly thought through their actions.

Solution 1. If that is the case, the candidate should return the money; she has two days to do so. And/or the donor could ask for the contribution back. Civics 101—lessons learned; that is why we have public discussions like those in this blog.

Solution 2. I have not been active in local politics, but I assume there is a platform and an ethics policy for all candidates from their respective political party. I would hope the above conduct would come under review by the party so it could not happen again.

Mary