

Looking at BPA numbers (3)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues July 22, 2019

(97th in a series of posts on parking)

Gadfly back in headquarters. Yard all tidy.

You and I are just walking through some of the relevant BPA documents seeing what we can see.

Salaries — are the BPAers fat cats?

Salaries are not broken down on the [budget sheets](#) (page 4). To be expected. And Gadfly would not be able to get them through a “Right-to-Know” request either. Confidential.

The Exec Director has been in the saddle five years. His starting salary was published in the newspaper when he was hired. It’s a good salary. But it seemed to Gadfly commensurate with the nature and scope of the job and probably roughly on par with City department heads. It doesn’t look like an easy job.

Last year while engaged in controversy with BPA, Gadfly wanted to know who pays the Exec’s salary — who signs the pay check — and if there were performance reviews. Gadfly was trying to identify the “chain of command” for purposes of accountability. The BPA is considered “independent.” But what does that mean? Who does the Exec report to? So Gadly asked (Right to Know) for a copy of the original contract (salary redacted) and evidence of performance reviews (though, of course, not a review itself). He wasn’t told he couldn’t have this information; he was

told there were no contracts or performance reviews. Gadfly was stunned. Really?

Language in newspaper articles makes it sound as if the BPA Board hires the Exec. Is then the Exec. responsible to the Board not the Mayor? Gadfly wishes he knew more about accountability in the BPA. Much more.

The BPA has a solicitor. Gadfly has no personal basis for knowing, but he has been told that the solicitor is a politically powerful person in the City. There is a line in the BPA budget for “professional fees – legal,” which was \$41,847 for 2018. Gadfly is not sure if that category applies only to the solicitor. The City Council solicitor earns about \$25,000.

Does the BPA board get paid? Gadfly is not sure. He believes, for instance, that some of the resident members of some of the ABCs in the City do get a small, token remuneration. The present Chair of the Board has held that position since 2008. There are long-time members of various ABCs (Authorities, Boards, Commissions), so his tenure is long but might not be all that unusual. But it would be interesting to know for sure whether there is any remuneration.

If your antennae are up, you will have heard Gadfly wonder here and there if BPA Board members play active roles in BPA decisions. Gadfly took notice this description in the [2018 Desman report](#) (page 41):

Meetings of the BPA Board are held regularly, typically on a monthly basis. During Board Meetings, the Executive Director of the Parking Authority reports to the Board on the financial performance of the Authority’s assets, informs the Board of new initiatives impacting the parking system and, periodically, seeks changes to off-street parking rates.

Look at the wording. The resident Board *is reported* to by the Exec and *is informed* by the Exec. Interestingly, there is nothing here about the Board taking an active, initiatory, agenda-setting, or critical role. Maybe we shouldn't make too much of this. But this description surely squares with my observation of a passive Board. Which is not good.