

# Parking Prognostications (66)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues November 7, 2018

*(66th in a series of posts on parking)*

6:49 Tuesday night. 24 hrs to “game time” as Gadfly starts to write this. (And 2-3 hours before any meaningful poll results come in!)

Game time. The City Council meeting, Gadfly means – the one in which the Bethlehem Parking Authority proposal to raise the violation fines is on the table again.

But, really, this vote is a referendum on BPA actions during this entire parking study process.

There’s actually quite a bit of drama going on. But yet it’s under the surface. The news hasn’t really been covering this process in any intensive way. The town isn’t on the edge of its seats.

So it’s easy to think of the drama as a “game.” And only between an inner circle of mostly faceless City officials.

Ho, hum. Who cares?

But that’s a mistake.

It really isn’t just a story of nickels, dimes, and quarters – even dollars – that most of us, frankly, won’t miss.

But it’s a story of – astonishingly – the hundreds of thousands of dollars those nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars add up to. Which they do. And the millions of dollars they leverage for construction.

And it’s equally an exquisitely focused story of how our town’s political process works, with its checks and balances.

What will happen Wednesday? Approve? Deny? Table?

Gadfly’s no prognosticator. He was completely taken by surprise by the Council to BPA letter that postponed a decision last time.

But let’s do some random thinking out loud. Excuse the randomness. But please join in. The more minds the better on this.

- Gadfly does not see any urgent need for action. The wheels aren’t going to fly off City life if nothing is done in the near- to medium-future, right? BPA has a timeline (ha! ironically, for this they do but not in a business plan!) of a January 1 soft start to the new rate schemes. But that deadline is not god-given, is, in fact, quite arbitrary. No decisions have been made on Walnut or Polk. The process could be tabled Wednesday

night with temporary damage only to egos. No rush. Calm down.

- Then the question would be what action would it take to successfully bring the proposal back on to the table? Well, Gadfly guesses the first question would be is there anything that would successfully bring it back on the table? Probably so. Probably there would be some condition. Otherwise, it wouldn't make sense to table rather than flatly deny. So, if tabling is in mind, it's probably best to think of tabling until \_\_\_\_\_ is performed or happens. Give some clear direction. See the stipulations in post #65.
- But BPA quite clearly said on Oct 10 in answer to direct questions that if this proposal was denied, BPA would ratchet up the enforcement to raise the revenue. Now that was a dastardly answer. One could envision squads of tow trucks. Beavies of boots. One could envision riots. Now – was that just a hot-tempered response, just a scare tactic, and not one that would ever be carried out? Maybe. But the point is that any move to deny or table the BPA proposal must think about what the BPA would do.
- So what is the most likely thing BPA would do if this proposal is flatly denied? Continuing with increased meter rates but static fines seems absurd. It would create a system in which it might make better financial sense to get a fine. And it would tend to lessen the availability of open spaces for shoppers, thus hurting merchants. So BPA wouldn't do that, right?
- Doing nothing, continuing the status quo doesn't seem likely either if, indeed, BPA genuinely needs extra cash. And it does for a capital repair program without even thinking about the two garages. So BPA would do something, wouldn't it?
- Wouldn't it be more likely that denying the BPA proposal would force them into a negotiating position? Gadfly assumes that Council agrees that something has to be done about the Walnut and Polk St issues – these are problems that aren't going away – so it's not total denial of BPA as the endgame but forward process and progress with BPA on solving legitimate parking problems in certain ways and under certain conditions. Would not denial assure that negotiation on those ways and conditions occurs?

- As Gadfly was working his way through the BPA answers to the City Council questions, you might remember that he surmised BPA felt it had a lock on an affirmative vote and thus did a perfunctory job. Gadfly wonders if that speculation has legs (wings!). Gadfly has absolutely no clue about whatever alliances – personal or political – operate in City government, but it just might be that this question drama is all sound and fury signifying nothing. 6 of the 7 Council members were present for the give-and-take of the Oct 10 meeting. 3 were strong questioners of BPA, but that does not necessarily mean they would vote against BPA. 1 was strongly for BPA. So Gadfly could draw no conclusions. But it seems reasonable to Gadfly that before the question-maneuver, there might have been a 4-3 vote in BPA's favor. The "game" might be over.
- But Gadfly will be listening closely to arguments given, if any, for positive votes. An argument for supporting BPA can be made, as he bulleted in his last post (#65). But Gadfly thinks that the BPA answers show publicly, visibly, the kinds of serious problems Gadfly has been reporting on privately and thus perhaps easy to discount. Gadfly thinks the response to the questions exposes serious flaws in the BPA to anyone willing to look.
- Gadfly thinks the BPA guilty of bad behavior and one does not reward bad behavior.
- For Gadfly the lack of a strategic business plan was the drop-dead moment.

Ok, time to see what's happening with the election returns.

Gadfly seems to have worked his way to hoping for (but not prognosticating) denial or tabling of the BPA proposal.

And – how has Gadfly stayed so innocent entering his 8<sup>th</sup> decade of life? – he would really like to see the getting together and working things out that end in the Kumbaya moment he joked about in posts #59 and #60. Life too short for hassling.

But Gadfly invites you to tell us what you think will or should happen tomorrow night.