

## Council Candidates – 2-year seat – Prompt 5 (30)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Serious Issues April 27, 2019

*(30th in a series of posts on candidates for election)*

*BCDC is hosting a candidates' forum May 6, 6PM,*

*at Steelworkers Hall,*

*53 E. Lehigh St.*

*Election Day is May 21*

*3 candidates*

*vote for 1*

*5th in the series of candidate statements*

*statements in reverse-alphabetical order this time*

<https://thebrownandwhite.com/2019/03/24/packer-avenue-transformation-lehigh/>

**On March 24, The Brown and White, the Lehigh University student newspaper, reported that Lehigh was exploring a pedestrian walkway on Packer Avenue, presumably between Brodhead and Webster Streets. Such a street “vacation” – should it ever be formally and officially proposed – would ultimately come before City Council for final disposition. Without prejudging how you would vote on such a now hypothetical proposal, describe what factors you would need to consider before reaching a decision.**

*Gadfly has been adding a bit of context to each of the prompts for the candidates. Here is what he gave to the candidates with this prompt: “I’m assuming you wouldn’t make a snap decision. I’m assuming that you wouldn’t immediately see such a proposal as ‘black and white.’ I’m assuming that you would weigh factors. I’m assuming that you will see that there are legal, technical, economic, cultural, historical, and political considerations involved in such a decision. I’m not sure we would call Lehigh a ‘developer,’ but some of the same tensions and controversies we have seen with developers may come into play here. Lehigh and the Southside have a ‘history.’ So, what different kinds of information would you want to have? Who would you want to hear from? Who are the stakeholders in such a decision? Preliminarily, what benefits do you see? Preliminarily, what concerns do you have? Preliminarily, what issues will you need to be sensitive to? What do you immediately ‘get’? What would you need to do more thinking about? Do not make a decision in your response to this prompt. The idea behind the prompt is to get an idea of how you would approach making a decision that may not be as clear-cut to many people as it seems on the surface and that may have conflicting ramifications. The idea*

*behind the prompt is to get an idea how prepared you are to recognize and reconcile multiple perspectives.”*



**Grace Crampsie Smith**

As an alumni of Lehigh University, I wish to see the university achieve success in its “Path towards Prominence.” Concurrently, as a resident of Bethlehem and candidate for City Council, I want to assure the best interests of ALL within the community are realized. There are many unanswered questions re: this proposal.

For example, how do we reconcile the advantages with the disadvantages? While Lehigh students and faculty may realize conveniences from a pedestrian walkway, what will be the impact upon commuters, visitors, and city residents? As a lifelong advocate for individuals with disabilities, how will it affect this population, and will it meet compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? Will accessibility for some limit accessibility for others? Specifically, how will those with physical disabilities access locations on Packer Avenue if vehicles are prohibited? We must consider that the general population frequently visits several locations on Packer Ave.

How many weddings have been held at Packer Chapel, and how would my physically disabled brother have been able to access this chapel for his son’s wedding if he could not be driven directly to the Chapel? My daughter, a Lehigh University High School Scholar, was fortunate to take a course at Lehigh that was located on Packer Avenue and had little difficulty as a student commuter at the age of 17.

Several buildings on Packer Avenue are venues for community events, and how would this impact attendees of these events? Thus, it is important to weigh the pros and cons for all affected — the Lehigh Community, Bethlehem residents, and city visitors.

Let’s also consider how other prominent universities navigate similar dilemmas? I can think of several elite universities that lack a pedestrian walkway and have survived and even flourished, such as Princeton, Penn State, and Notre Dame. Also, several prominent universities literally exist within city streets such as the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, and Drexel. Let’s examine how they address pedestrian traffic within heavily traveled city streets.

We must also be cognizant of the effects that Lehigh's sprawl has had upon the community in the past and assure that this initiative is thoroughly considered so that community relations is enhanced and not damaged. Let's also consider previous pedestrian walkways within our city such as Broad St. — what have we learned from that initiative?

Prior to making a decision upon this proposal, I would want to assure all avenues are explored and propose a traffic study be conducted, as well as explore how this will impact accessibility for ALL — students, commuters, visitors, and residents of Bethlehem.



**Will Carpenter**

Providing pedestrian-centric areas in our community is a good thing, especially in a campus environment. Of course, cars and trucks will still need access to most of these areas — and I can enjoy driving as much as I can enjoy walking

and riding — but I think we are better served by designing for walkers in our high density areas and not continue to be car-focused in our planning and development.

Making any change to existing traffic patterns must be made carefully and with the input of residents and businesses most affected. Traffic studies are important, but the real experiences and concerns of our citizens will have a greater impact on my decision.

Lastly, I would ask Ed Gallagher to submit a 300-word essay on the topic each Saturday morning so I could make sure I was seeing all sides of the issue.

*The candidacy status of Ashley Daubert is uncertain at this time.*