Candidate input at the CDC meeting on the South Bethlehem Historic District plan

The Bethlehem Gadfly Southside May 12, 2021

The latest in a series of posts on the Southside

ref: **On the Southside, size matters**
ref: **Maybe last chance Tuesday to control appropriate building height on the Southside**
ref: **Significant pushback against . . .**
ref: **Southsider Smith counsels the City . . .**

We are, of course, in election time, and it turns out that 4 people running participated in the important Community Development Committee meeting last night.

So it would be especially interesting to focus on their reactions to the report and their contributions to the discussion.

Gadfly always asks you to make up your own minds, but Gadfly was disappointed in the participation by incumbents Reynolds and Crampsie Smith.

They seemed distant from the specific resident concerns about height — the elephant in the room — and general dissatisfaction with developers that you have seen Gadfly chronicle over several posts.

Perhaps understandable for Councilman Reynolds who may not have been aware of past discussions, but all the more surprising about Councilwoman Crampsie Smith who was at the meeting 3-4 weeks ago when residents turned out in significant numbers to argue against the proposed heights in the proposal draft.

Reynolds and Crampsie Smith did not seem to be sharing the same urgent vibe that brought the callers to the meeting.

Strange.

Not so Mayoral candidate Grubb and Council candidate Leon, who, of course, is a Southside resident.

Unfortunately, I missed Leon's comment. I think she spoke after me, and I must have forgotten to turn on my recorder.

But Grubb and Leon melded with the significant number of other callers who expressed dissatisfaction with the report.

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Councilwoman Crampsie Smith:

- glad you are addressing affordable housing
- should we put lower levels of building height in the zoning ordinance so that we have more leverage adding affordable housing — negotiate room with developer
- developers have said that anything like this would be helpful in getting them to agree to an affordable housing element
- developers have said it is a challenge to work with HCC, stringent
- not as much collaboration with HCC as they would like
- anything we can do to collaborate with developers in a better way would be helpful
- what can we do about demolition by neglect?
- how do other cities deal with blight?

Councilman Reynolds:

- perception that our conversations are mainly about new buildings, big buildings is a problem
- perception that "we" are driving these projects and that's all we are interested in talking about
- part of the frustration of people is that these projects take up so much of the time and energy
- asks for fill in on decision of who to talk with and etc. — details of process
- how many responses did we get to survey?
- how many key interviews and who?
- what are we looking at in terms of process?

- implementation will be an ongoing public process
- big document, lots of different ways to look at things
- don't want to create as many problems as solve
- has as many questions after reading the report as he did before

Candidate Grubb:

- Councilwoman Van Wirt nailed it
- ignorant developers — shame on them
- surprised that South Bethlehem Historical Society was not included — unconscionable
- need better communication about meetings
- City and consultant are ignoring survey results
- and not listening to citizen commentary — tone deaf
- some people see the Southside as ripe for plunder
- inclusionary not being used, assess developers a fee to go into a fund for affordable housing
- go block by block and measure height of buildings and then use that as your limit in that block
- bothersome that public official who advocated for the creation of the district now support out of scale development
- ignoring community vision for the district for the developer vision
- blatant disrespect for public engagement
- almost no conversation about environmental aspects
- analysis in the study is flawed and incomplete