

# Christmas gifts for Morning Star (67)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Serious Issues December 18, 2018

*(67th in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St.)*

*Beall Fowler is a retired professor and long-time resident of Bethlehem.*

December 17, 2018

Dear President Waldron and members of Bethlehem City Council,

As befits the Christmas season here in Bethlehem, you are being asked to provide two significant holiday gifts to a business, Morning Star Partners, LLC by rubber-stamping a piece of legislation drafted, not by the City, but by the business that seeks to benefit from that legislation.

The first proposed gift to Morning Star regarding 2 W. Market St. has been the basis of nearly all of the favorable testimony on their behalf, namely that the business currently operating in this (now) office building is wonderful, with high-minded principals, and therefore deserves this gift.

But little or no discussion has appeared regarding the second gift that will be realized when Quadrant leaves that site. I use the word “when” here without any knowledge of timing, but this will certainly happen sooner or later. For that is the nature of a business, particularly a dynamic enterprise. A business is temporary, while zoning is permanent. There will be a time when a proper business decision will be made by Quadrant to leave 2 W. Market St., for any one of a number of legitimate reasons. For example, they may well outgrow this site. Or perhaps their business model will evolve. That is the nature of free enterprise.

It is clear that the Morning Star officers have thought about this as well, by including in section (7) of their legislation a long list of 12 permitted uses for this site. This is the second holiday gift that you will grant if you approve this legislation, for it considerably enhances the value of the property by increasing the number and types of businesses that may legally operate there. Such a

large range of potential buyers will surely add to a sale price, or the rent if they decide not to sell.

All twelve of these businesses are legitimate enterprises in commercial zones, but none are presently allowed in residential zones. Many of them would involve considerable customer traffic, unlike the Quadrant operation. All could occupy the entire building, as occurs on Delaware Avenue. Even the category of financial services is so broad that it encompasses everything from a bank to a pawn shop or payday loan office.

Yes, but some say the Zoning Hearing Board will protect us. But these 12 uses would be allowed by law and cannot be blocked by the ZHB, only regulated. The late Ralph Schwarz once said, "We are all here because we love Bethlehem." As lovers of Bethlehem, we can certainly do much better than this misguided piece of legislation. Gifts to an individual at the expense of the welfare of the City do not show that love.

Sincerely yours,  
Beall Fowler