

Chewing on SBHS concerns: CM Callahan's response (5)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Neighborhoods, Serious Issues, Southside June 11, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts on the Southside and Neighborhoods)

Gadfly has pointed out – very recently, in fact — that CW Van Wirt and CM Callahan, literally sitting at the far ends of the Head Table, are North Pole and South Pole.

One might think of CW Negron and CM Callahan as North Galaxy and South Galaxy.

Gadfly has written of [the Great Divide](#) between them on visions of the Southside.

Whether you were in attendance at the June 4 Council meeting or watching on tv, you just knew that CM Callahan was going to respond to CW Negron's 10-minute emotion-laden commentary on the South Bethlehem Historical Society's May 22 letter.

Low-hanging fruit.

But to Gadfly CM Callahan's response was – happily — different than expected.

Yes, he showed the usual defensiveness and fact-checking: no demolitions occurred on the Southside for new construction, you can't force developers to do lower cost housing, Lehigh University has done the necessary.

But his tone was even, not angry or aggressive, or, I thought, condescending, and he recognized the validity of perhaps the key problem CW Negron identified – affordable housing – and volunteered *three times* to “team” with her – yes, yes, though not with a tremendous amount of confidence – to find developers interested in providing more affordable housing.

Gadfly found that something to behold.

And told him so (he doesn’t follow the blog).

Listen on the [City video at min. 1:58:01](#) or here below.

As usual, leave the soundbites for later review. Listen to the primary source.

AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE

- I read Mr. James’s letter, and I agree with a lot of it in there.
- I think it’s also important to know that . . . the two new properties down there . . . nothing demolished there.
- I’m not sure that we can force anybody through ordinances . . . you can’t force someone to build low income, or middle income, or high-income housing.
- You can’t do that – you pass the zoning, you can say high density, low density, or whatever.
- But if a developer wants to build higher-end condo units and that’s what the market is bearing, then that’s what they’re going to do.
- I’m sure it will come a time – I hope it’s soon – that some developer – or, Ms. Negron, I’d be happy to work with you if we could find some developers – I don’t know where – but through my contacts I’d be more than happy to reach out to

some of them and maybe we can find some property on the Southside where we can build more moderately affordable housing over there .

- But, you know, I'm not sure the City can tell a developer that you can't build housing, residential units that are high-rent.
- That's just what the market's bearing right now.
- So I don't think I've ever voted on a historical structure other than Martin Tower . . . that's ever been ripped down in the City.
- All the other development over there was on empty land.
- But I agree with you that the affordability is a huge issue.
- I teach at Northeast Middle School, I think 75% of the kids there are from Marvine and Pembroke Village, and a lot of those kids are really struggling every day, and I see it, I live with them every day.
- And I'd be more than happy to team up with you [CW Negrón] and see if we could find some developers – maybe you have some people that you might know that might want to do low-income or moderate income housing on the Southside.
- I do know for a fact, though, that Lehigh University does have Graduate housing for married couples.
- I think Lehigh has done what they've had to do as far as graduate-level, married couple housing.
- I would be more than happy to team with you and try to find builders.
- I'm not sure we can force them to do that, but it's worth a try.

Heckuva 3-part interchange we've chronicled here. SBHS, ON, and BC. Let's think about whether we've made any progress on important issues here. Next.