

Mayoral candidate Dana Grubb: “It is time for a mayor who is not a political insider”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Election January 28, 2021

🌿 *Latest in a series of posts on candidates for election* 🌿

selections from Sara K. Satullo, “It’s a race: Dana Grubb enters Democratic Bethlehem mayoral field.” lehighvalleylive.com, January 27, 2021.

Former Bethlehem city administrator Dana Grubb on Wednesday jumped into the Bethlehem mayoral race.

Grubb, 70, is running as a Democrat and he’ll face [Bethlehem City Councilman J. William Reynolds](#), 39, in the May Democratic primary. Mayor Bob Donchez cannot run again because of the city’s two-term limit for mayor.

Over his 27-year career in city government, Grubb helped create the tax increment financing district that ushered in the redevelopment of the former factory into the SteelStacks campus.



“Our history is what makes Bethlehem unique, and distinguishes it among others,” Grubb said. “We need to build on that history to secure and grow our future.”

In his speech Grubb touted his ability to work collaboratively across departments over his career to solve the problems facing the city. He vowed to bring that attitude back to City Hall.

Grubb was the city grants administrator and deputy director of community development among other roles. He retired from the city in 2004 after he and Harvey Joseph, who was the environmental health director, got into a fistfight in City Hall. Then-Mayor John Callahan told them they could retire or be fired.

“I also believe in personal accountability, service to community, and leaving the world in a better place,” Grubb said Wednesday. “We’re all held accountable for the mistakes we’ve made. We should learn from them, and then move on to remain active and contributing members of society.”

Currently, Grubb owns a small business providing photography to local Relators, the Wind Creek Event Center and working for The Bethlehem Press.

The lifelong city resident said he’s running for mayor solely to serve the citizens of Bethlehem. If elected, he will not take city health benefits or accrue a pension, he vowed.

“It is time for a mayor who is not a political insider, someone who will be independent of political expediency, and who will seek only to serve Bethlehem residents and improve the quality of life throughout the community. It is nobody’s ‘turn’ to be Mayor, after holding other elected offices,” Grubb said referencing Reynolds, who lost to Donchez in the 2013 mayoral primary but did not challenge him four years later. “Bethlehem needs someone who will apply common sense and logic to governance, and not default to political favoritism based on campaign contributions or other influential factors.”

Bethlehem residents tell Grubb they don’t feel their government is responsive and Grubb says city worker morale is at an all-time low. A respected and content workforce will deliver better services to residents, developers, contractors, business owners and relators, he said.

If elected, Grubb would form a small business concierge, a one-stop shop to help aspiring and current business owners navigate bureaucracy.

“Public service is an attitude as well as a commitment, and poor morale among city workers affects how well services are delivered to the community,” Grubb said.

The Bethlehem Parking Authority is a top complaint for many residents and business owners, who feel it is not responsive or in touch with the community’s needs, he said. Grubb floated the idea of possibly bringing

the day-to-day operations of the authority into City Hall, allowing the authority to operate solely as a financing authority.

The city needs to continue to expand its tax base via economic development, but in a manner that respects the city's rich history and is compatible with its neighborhoods, Grubb said. Bethlehem needs more affordable housing — not public housing — but homes for working-and-middle class families like the one he grew up in, he said.

“Community development has played second fiddle to economic development for too many years,” Grubb said.

He vowed to create a city-wide affordable housing task force. (Councilwoman Grace Crampsie Smith recently created an affordable housing task force.)

Public safety and a strong parks and recreation systems would be at the forefront of city services in his administration, Grubb said.

“I believe that a robust community policing program strengthens relationships between residents and law enforcement, and builds trust,” he said. “Training in both traditional law enforcement disciplines as well as newer applications will ensure that every resident can trust the Bethlehem Police Department to apply the law equally, to everyone, at all times.”

selections from Anthony Salamone, “Former city administrator Dana Grubb is second Democrat to announce a run for Bethlehem mayor.” Morning Call, January 27, 2021.

Former city administrator Dana Grubb announced his campaign Wednesday, delivering a 10-minute speech before supporters at the Steel Ice Center in south Bethlehem.

Before his speech, Grubb said there are several key issues facing the city's next mayor, including improving public safety, building up the city's affordable housing stock, and creating a caretaker, or “concierge,” to help small businesses.

Grubb, 70, whose nearly three decades of work for the city included time as grants administrator and deputy director of community development, last held a city position in 2004. He was forced to retire after fighting with another employee in City Hall.

But the northeast Bethlehem resident, who said he received approximately \$24,000 a year in a city pension after retiring, has stayed active in Bethlehem government in various ways. He has also worked as a freelance writer and photographer, and has owned a photography business. He said during his speech that he would not take another pension or accept health insurance benefits if he is elected mayor.

No Republican has formally announced for mayor. The Northampton County Republican Committee did not respond to messages seeking comment. Bethlehem traditionally has held a Democratic majority among voters, with the last Republican mayor, Ken Smith, serving during the 1990s. He resigned three months early in 1997 to take a position at Lehigh University.