

Thinking more about supporting the police

The Bethlehem Gadfly | Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance, Police | November 21, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Gadfly continuing to think more about the Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance and support for the police after his earlier post this morning.

In that November 18 Facebook post commentary, LVGNA says, “Sadly, our request for City Council members to improve their understanding about what our police do and how they do it fell on deaf ears. They only seem to want to hear from the radical activists who share their leftist political bias. Luckily, Council members Olga Negron, Adam Waldron and Grace Crampsie Smith are coming up for re-election in November 2021. Perhaps Bethlehem’s voters should help them move on to jobs where they would do less damage.”

LVGNA specifically targets Councilpeople Negron, Crampsie Smith, and Waldron for negative focus at next election time, which would really be the May primary not November. And campaigns will be starting soon. In Allentown, for instance, several people have already declared for mayor.

But there is also a 4th Councilperson up for re-election next year.

That Councilperson is Bryan Callahan.

Councilman Callahan does not seem to be on LVGNA’s negative re-election radar.

LVGNA is not suggesting that their followers help move Councilman Callahan on.

Now it is true that except for Councilman Callahan, one does not hear magniloquent [good opportunity to use today's Merriam-Webster word-of-the-day] encomiums [good SAT word] about the police.

Gadfly is not sure there is anything especially deducible from that about the other three, at least not without substantial additional evidence.

But it is true that Councilman Callahan has been known to deliver something like magniloquent encomiums that contain many true points about the police.

Gadfly has knit together here two such examples, a short one from the November 9 budget hearing (1 min.) and a bit longer one from the October 29 Committee of the Whole meeting (4 mins.).

Something in the Councilman's words is bothersome to the Gadfly.

It's the strain of uncritical adulation.

Gadfly has heard this tone before.

Councilman Callahan is unabashedly, unashamedly pro-developer. Gadfly has heard this tone before in his direct personally praiseworthy address to the owner of 2 W. Market during a tough City Council meeting.

Gadfly knows he's being the quintessential unpopular gadfly here and knows he'll get a slap upside the head, but the gushing praise for Chief Kott (he knew she was going places) that elicits her muted, embarrassed

“thank you” and his desire for the Chief to give an atta-boys-and-girls shout-out to the entire police force for him seems out of place (imagine how this would be done — loudspeaker announcements, emails to everybody, taking time at roll calls).

Gadfly is no expert on Council protocol, but such pronouncements from the Head Table can suggest attempts to curry favor.

And statements like “our police department is way ahead of most police departments in the country” just feel a little too hyperbolic for Gadfly’s liking.

The job of the Councilman in a strong Mayor-Council form of government is to be a check-and-balance. And the job of a Councilman in this cultural moment of reckoning with race is hard-nosed, open-minded, unprejudiced analysis of the way we do public safety.

Gadfly needs to feel the Councilman is capable of those things.

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