

Councilmen Callahan and Reynolds fact-gather on the proposed Polk Street Garage (83)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues July 8, 2019

(83rd in a series of posts on parking)

Continuing our report on BPA's presentation on the Polk Street Garage at the July 2 City Council meeting. Councilpersons Callahan and Reynolds followed Van Wirt.

Councilman Callahan

BC focused on making certain points implicitly opposed to the direction in which PVW was moving: the parking violation rates must go up, there is substantial demand for the PSG; the low contract rates are a good thing; the Ruins lots are not in play.

Video of July 2 City Council meeting [at min. 44:40](#).

- received affirmation that the BPA goal is for the rate for the garages to be lower than the meter rate for an 8hr. period (they are the same now) to get long-term parkers off the street and enable more transient parking
- clarified the letters-of-intent commitments already adding up to 375 spots in the proposed 470-spot PSG
- asked about garage contract rates at other local/regional cities, learning, for instance, that Allentown is \$75/month, Scranton \$95, compared to our \$65 (*Gadfly wonders where the \$118/month that PVW referred to comes from — the Desman parking study?*), prompting the BPA to see and say our low rate is a “good thing”

- commented on the dead-end, storeless quality of the present WSG street and clarified the comparative rebuild/repair costs for WSG
- later in the meeting, CM Callahan reported on a meeting with a Wind Creek executive in which (implied reference to PVW's comments) it was clear Wind Creek is not interested in selling the Ruins Lots, so that discussion of them is "non-productive" and we should "move on"

Councilman Reynolds

JWR raised some interesting long-term, wonkish, "10,000 feet up" questions quite characteristic of his wide-ranging approach to gathering information.

Video of July 2 City Council meeting [at min. 52:30](#).

- What is the effect of ride-share programs? Nothing so far, BPA revenue continues to go up. The rise in automobile ownership and the rise in population cancels some effect that is seen in increased leisure use of ride-share. Latest thought in the industry is how to better manage curbside because that's where ride-sharing will have quickest effect. Very interesting question by JWR.
- With implied reference to PVW's comments, why do we offer the lower \$65 contract rate? (*Which, it turns out, is a rate offered to everybody, even month-to-month parkers.*) Is it just because we want to get people off of the street? Or because it is helpful to businesses? What's our theory in offering that lower rate? *Another good question.* Many factors. BPA says they are working to bring up the rate, but don't want to raise the rates

suddenly and can sustain the system presently at the \$65 rate, so no especial need to. (*Gadfly still confused at where the \$118/month rate as a point of reference comes from.*)

- Offered his opinion that Walnut Street needs “new energy.” A complete re-do of that structure with re-thinking about how Walnut Street itself fits in are in order.
- Again with implied reference to PVW’s comments, what information about the potential development of Ruins Lots can be shared? Not much to share, it turns out. About 250 cars parking there now. Exact identification of who is using the lots is not available. (*The three commitments to a new PSG total 375 spaces — Gadfly wonders where they are parking now.*)
- Has Wind Creek talked of building garages? Nothing specific, but the expectation is that there will be.