

Bethlehem Council Should Learn from the Past about Social Programs

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Community Engagement Initiative October 1, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts about the Community Engagement Initiative 

Bud Hackett is a Bethlehem resident who raised 4 kids in the City. He recently became very interested in quality of life issues in the city and hopes to offer a balance to the approach City Council is taking.

Lynette Tolbert Hazelton, “For 40 Years, Philly Mayors Have Promised to End Poverty.” Philadelphia Magazine, September 3, 2020

Citizens of Bethlehem have become aware of the left-leaning political perspective of City Council members since June of 2020. The political pressure from some extreme left groups including Black Lives Matter and Lehigh Valley Stands Up and others who were interacting with City Council members resulted in the Resolution 105 or the Community Engagement Initiative.

Lots more to say about the quotes from Council members in sympathy of those groups to “refund the police.” It is nice they record their meetings for all to hear.

It’s **Important to think about** where City Council is going in sympathy to those groups with the upcoming budget hearings. I urge Council to read/consider a recent article/investigation in Philadelphia that examined four decades of social programs designed and funded to win the “war on poverty.” That means the federal and city programs to address poverty and what we now call “systemic racism.”

Bottom line, a black female reporter from the North Philly area says Mayor after Mayor comes up with new programs, millions of dollars in spending, and she concludes, **NONE HAVE WORKED** to alleviate Poverty. Read on . . .

The War on Poverty | We lost with bad programs – need a better way. (8 29 20)

In her September 2020 article “**Poverty: Our 40 Year Tragedy,**” author Lynette Tolbert-Hazelton profiles the efforts of 40 years of Mayoral leadership in Philadelphia to address the poverty issue.

Ms. Tolbert-Hazelton describes herself as a third-generation black resident of North Philadelphia, an area she refers to as “the Jungle.” She is a journalist who has observed and written about Mayor(s) Bill Green (1980), Wilson Goode (1984), Ed Rendell (1992), John Street (2000), Michael Nutter (2008), and the current Mayor Kenny.

The article discusses 40 years of “promises to end poverty” and the enormous amount of money spent to address the extraordinarily complex issue. She discusses how the politically correct programs, the ones that get the votes, did not result in measurable improvements in reducing poverty levels in the city. She asks the question, “How did Philadelphia become the poorest big city in America?”

Four decades of mayors have tried to “reverse-engineer the city’s poverty problem and its concomitant issues. **THEY ALL FAILED.**”

The author discusses the loss of manufacturing jobs in the city resulting in increased poverty as folks with entry-level skills struggled to find jobs in the information economy as city policies and rising taxes drove business out of the city. She references Mayor Rendell’s book, *A Nation of Wusses: How America’s Leaders Lost the Guts to Make Us Great*.

She talks about the work she did with the President Clinton era program called the Transitional Work Corporation (TWC) that received **\$32** million between 2007 and 2011, then abruptly ended with little success. Some of the training included “telling clients they had to stop smoking weed so they could pass a drug test” and “help them redesign their lives so they could prioritize work . . .”

Another program to address poverty in Philadelphia was Rendell’s Neighborhood Transition Initiative (NTI), a **\$300** million bond issue in 2002. After 13 years of operation, the NTI spent “half the money on demolitions and the other half on preservation”: “The problem is that

urban renewal doesn't lift folks out of poverty." "Most experts say what's really needed is a good education system" (suggest you read her next few paragraphs).

In Philadelphia, the problem persists and will now be left to the next mayor.

Bud

to be continued . . .