

# “That’s my report, Mr. President”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing July 27, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd killing* 

*We have an opportunity to do something truly momentous.*

*Anna Smith*

Gadfly is lonely.

He misses Stephen Antalics. Gadfly hasn’t heard the sometimes gruff voice, hasn’t witnessed the sometimes steely stare of Gadfly #1 since City Council went into pandemic mode. Stephen just might not be comfortable with the call-in format. Face-to-face is his *métier*. This Gadfly hopes Stephen is well. We missed celebrating his birthday in June. Alas. Lost in the shuffle.

Gadfly misses at this complex cultural moment an old-fashioned Bethlehem beat journalist with dog-whistle ears, claws for digging, a snout for “the” story, and a penchant for analysis. Like a Paul Carpenter or a Bill White. Controversial even. A lightning-rod journalist. Have we ever had one? Strohmeyer? Maybe Kate Laepple when the *Morning Call* had a Bethlehem bureau. We need to be stirred, we need to be thinking.

Gadfly misses the voice of the Mayor. At Council last week, Gadfly listened for the Mayor’s voice on matters of urgent concern. He gave hopeful COVID-19 facts, announced the purchase of 100 parklets to help our small businesses in these “challenging times,” and recognized the positive efforts of the recreation department and the Health Bureau on playground events.

Good.

But that was it: “That’s my report, Mr. President.”

Nothing on the meeting of the Community Advisory Board?

Nothing on the resolution on the Community Engagement Initiative he received from Council the previous meeting that holds such promise?

Gadfly says again, is he the only one that finds this silence odd?

Anna Smith's rousing words play continuously in Gadfly's head: "We have an opportunity to do something truly momentous."

Gadfly agrees and was hanging expectantly on words from our leader.

We are a City with 30% Latino and 10% African American — those are big People of Color numbers.

"We have an opportunity to do something truly momentous."

Gadfly has said that in his experience the Mayor is a man of few words. Which is a good thing. He is not one of those "wind demon" elected officials who self-servingly hog the mic. I wouldn't want him any other way most times. And he did get out in front with his early response to the murder of George Floyd. But since then nothing. Nothing that Gadfly can see. Nothing that the public can see. His report to Council took two minutes.

"We have an opportunity to do something truly momentous."

Gadfly hopes the City can rise to the momentous. But he doesn't feel anything going on.

The momentous will be controversial.

But there were only two voices July 21 countering the advocates for change July 7 — and those two voices were from the same street, maybe even the same house.

Only about 24 people attended the live-streamed July 21 Council meeting. It's as if people didn't expect anything to happen. (Since then there have been 148 views as of this moment, which is good, but if that counts repeat visits subtract the 10 or so times Gadfly has returned to watch parts of the video).

Are people paying attention to what is going on? To what could go on?

Shouldn't somebody be beating the drum? Keeping the momentum toward the momentous going?

Like the Mayor?

But Council is not absolved either. Gadfly has wondered in the past about Public Safety Committee chair Colon's resolve in such comments as "I truly believe that Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, we're not going to be the ones to change the world, to change the country."

Contrast that to "We have an opportunity to do something truly momentous."

Gadfly would like Bethlehem to be a leader.

Gadfly would like to give the momentous a shot.