

Council Candidates – 2-year seat – Prompt 7 (45)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Serious Issues May 12, 2019

(45th in a series of posts on candidates for election)

Election Day is May 21

2 candidates

vote for 1

7th in the series of candidate statements

Prompt #7, 1 & 2

1) Participation

Gadfly followers want to be involved, want to be heard, do not see themselves as CAVE people (citizens against virtually everything). How can Council foster increased citizen participation with and trust in City government? Possible foci include increased interactive technology, increased public inclusion, office hours,

different kinds of Council meetings, a different format for the current Council meetings, a stronger ethics ordinance, term limits.



Grace Crampsie Smith

I feel enhancement of existing technology is important. Specifically, the city website needs to be upgraded. The impending 311 service is a step in the right direction as far as increasing constituents' access to city government. We also need to assure calls to city hall are answered and returned promptly.

I also feel that in order to promote accessibility to ALL citizens within the city, we should consider alternating locations of council meetings throughout the city on a sporadic basis. It appears that the same individuals attend council meetings and while their attendance is admirable, perhaps there are others that would attend if it would be more convenient. For example, some cannot walk to the meetings, and parking is not always available in close proximity to city hall. If we “go to” the people in the community sporadically, it may increase meeting participation by constituents. Other entities such as school boards achieve this by rotating meetings throughout different schools. Perhaps we could do the same?

We can also consider Town Hall-type meetings on a sporadic basis where the agenda is designated solely towards input from citizens.

Will Carpenter



We don't have CAVE people. That is a name made up for people who are engaged by a few old cavemen to protect the status quo. People are more likely to voice their opinions when they disagree, but it would be great to have more voices supporting good initiatives like the Climate Action Plan, ethics provisions, and others. I think our Council has made important progress in transparency, and many of our Council members do a good job being responsive and available, but there is room for improvement. I think engaging and listening to citizens is perhaps even more important for the Mayor and his administration. It is encouraging to see some progress here as well — such as the recent decision to hold meetings later in the afternoon so more people with standard working hours can attend.

We live in interesting times, and I believe there is positive energy at work. Democracy and citizenship require work. More of us need to attend the events, read the papers and the blogs that help inform us. It is not the government's job to solve our problems or to invite us to participate. It is our job to require our elected officials pay attention to our needs and to hold them accountable. I would encourage more neighborhood and other local groups to organize and send representatives to attend Council meetings or watch the published recordings. It is most important that people are looking when the sunlight is let in.

2) A Vision of/for the City

The job of a leader is to have a vision that inspires citizens, that connects with citizens, that engages citizens. Sometimes that vision is capsuled in a slogan. What is your vision of/for Bethlehem? What is your vision of Bethlehem past, or Bethlehem present, or Bethlehem future? How is Bethlehem unique – in a positive, negative, or potential way? Are there best practices from other cities you would you like to see implemented in Bethlehem? Does a pedestrian/bicycle bridge that would connect the north and south sides fit into that vision?



Grace Crampsie Smith

My vision is captured in the following: “Embrace our rich heritage as we build our future.” Given Bethlehem’s rich cultural and architectural history, it is fundamental to maintain a balance between preserving the city’s past, honoring the people and businesses that built this city, and

promoting progress in our diverse community. Bethlehem is a city that has never been stagnant. We are unique in that for centuries Bethlehem has constantly evolved and re-invented itself in the arts, education, and business while never losing sight of its heritage. Maintaining a balance between our past and future will remain a constant challenge, yet an achievable one. The Steel Stacks is a fine example of connecting the past and the future. While many steelworkers had concerns re: this project, it has a good mix of preservation of the industry that built this city and the addition of a great cultural center for the city. As we move forward, it is imperative to honor and build upon our unique past, while incorporating modern and smart growth.



Will Carpenter

Bethlehem is a gem. We are very fortunate to have inherited what we have from past leaders. Many, many business leaders, residents, and city employees work to make what we have so special. Our first obligation is to respect that work and the needs of our current tax payers. Where is the sense in giving public funding to attract new businesses that harm existing ones? We must define what we value in our community and make policy to promote and protect those values.

This has always been a place where hard working people can afford to live, find good jobs and attend great schools. To protect this we need strong leadership to value and attract more than just high-end developments. Neighborhoods should have a seat at the table when new projects are considered. If a project is not supported by the surrounding neighborhood citizens, their concerns should be addressed before a project can move forward. At the very least, contested projects should not be awarded public funding or tax incentives.

Our historic city is uniquely situated for smart growth — or exploitation. Our geographic position, natural and historic beauty makes us attractive to businesses and investors. We should both protect and take advantage of this and make Bethlehem better for everyone — with projects that help fund solid infrastructure and connectivity, improve air and water quality, and so on to allow us all pursue our livelihoods on equal footing.

We must respect our past as we forge our future.