

## Council Candidates – 2-year seat – Prompt 4 (25)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues April 20, 2019

*(25th in a series of posts on candidates for election)  
Bethlehem NAACP "Candidate's Night 2019," April 22, 7PM, at  
Steelworkers Hall,  
53 E. Lehigh St.  
BCDC is hosting a candidates' forum May 6, 6PM, at Steelworkers Hall,  
53 E. Lehigh St.  
registration deadline April 22  
Election Day is May 21  
vote for 1*

*4th in the series of candidate statements  
statements in alphabetical order this time*

### **Talk about budgets and the budgeting process, arguably the most important power and responsibility that City Council has.**



**Will Carpenter**

As a new member to Council, I would first need to listen and learn about process and the current and past budget initiatives, long-term objectives and challenges. While I have created budgets, had profit/loss accountability, projected expenses and negotiated costs, I have never been a part of a municipal budgeting process and will have much to learn.

For expenditures, my priorities would start with public safety — from police, fire, and EMS to health and water quality. Keeping our community safe and our first responders well-equipped should be non-negotiable. Code enforcement is also part of public safety. We have rules, so we should make sure they are consistently enforced and our departments have the resources to do so.

On the revenue side, we must protect and support our current strongest sources of revenue while looking ahead to the next revenue generators. Our business community and residential neighborhoods are the backbone of our city. We are partners in success. As the economy and the world continues to change, Bethlehem must be forward-looking to meet the needs of the next generation.

So initially, my responsibility is to ask questions, hold departments accountable and learn. Are we, the citizens, receiving good value on the expenditure? What can we learn from past experience, or other municipalities experiences? Times aren't always good, and bad times don't last forever. Don't overspend and don't under-invest. It is a difficult balance, and I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I will certainly ask the questions. Above all, don't play politics with the budget. I will tell it like it is and make the hard choices with a long-term perspective.



**Ashley Daubert**

In a healthcare setting, members of nursing leadership (like myself), are involved with some of the most critical functions in budgetary planning. Like nurse managers, the members of City Council serve as the link between the plans of administration/City and the workforce/tax payer. In my experience, the use of historical budgeting is a vital component of planning the next fiscal year's budget. As a member of City Council, I would review historical budgets from the previous (at least) four years, and identify patterns and trends. I would also compare this data to a chart of accounts for the City – analyzing revenue, expenses, liabilities, and assets. I would then compare actual revenue and expenses to the budgeted revenue and expenses for each year. Variances would be identified and variance analyses completed, as appropriate. The budgeting process is ongoing and dynamic. It should provide feedback and opportunity for corrective action; this is essential in managing a budget.

In the development of a budget, it is important to really analyze what is being requested. For example, in the healthcare setting, there are things we need to function, and there are things that would be wonderful to have in an “ideal situation.” This is a concept I use when creating our

household budget as well. I call it the “need vs. want” scenario(s) – the same mentality I would use as a member of City Council. I have reviewed the City of Bethlehem 2019 Operating and Capital Budgets, but without being able to (also) review some of the aforementioned historical documentation, at this point, I can only say it is very comprehensive and diverse. I can appreciate that it does not intend to allocate funding disproportionately in one area versus another.

It is difficult to condense such a broad topic into the summary above – but in closing, a critical task in creating and/or approving a budget is collecting relevant data. Armed with this knowledge, Council can make fiscally responsible decisions to ensure the City can run efficiently, without raising taxes.

My Grandfather, Dale Daubert, served on the South Whitehall Township Board of Commissioners for 25 years. He was an outspoken advocate for preservation, and consistently voted against tax increases in the township. This is something he was known for, and I intend to fight the same way for the taxpayers of my City. You might say – it’s in my blood.



**Grace Crampsie Smith**

My previous budgetary experience with allocating federal, state, and local funds will be beneficial in my role as city councilperson. In my capacity as Addictions Counselor and Coordinator of Community and Early Intervention Services for Lehigh County Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, I was faced with the arduous task of assuring limited taxpayer funds were utilized most efficiently for my clients and families. Budgetary battles were the norm, for there were never enough funds to adequately serve those in need, and waiting lists prevailed. Currently as a school counselor I again am faced with budgetary dilemmas in that school districts are faced with rising costs, especially given the diversion of sufficient funds from the budget to charter schools. As AP Coordinator, I am responsible for the AP budget and am facing increasingly challenges to offset rising costs with assuring quality administration of the AP program.

Negotiation and mediation skills have been the hallmark of my career as a counselor and human services administrator. While at Lehigh County, I

facilitated the transformation of our service delivery from contract-private provider based to a Family Driven- Family Support Services model. This entailed weekly meetings with a Family Council, comprised of parents of those with developmental disabilities. After more than a year of intense negotiations, we successfully transformed our delivery system, eliminating waiting lists, and assuring all clients/families received services. Negotiation was certainly the key during this arduous yearlong process, and I was complimented for my efforts.

What we need to remember re: the city budget is that like most budgets, the majority of the budget is comprised of fixed costs items such as personnel and health care. In fact 75.2 % of the general fund is comprised of personnel costs.

As a taxpayer I certainly “get it” that no one wants to have their taxes raised. Concurrently, as a long-time professional in the area of human services, I see on a daily basis the need for services funded by public monies.

As time commences, costs increase — that’s why we have cost of living increases. So how do we balance this, especially for those on fixed incomes that receive minimal to no COLA? As a councilperson, it is vital to assure funds are spent most efficiently, and prioritization is essential. We can also look at alternate sources of funding such as grants. When I wanted to empower our at-risk 9<sup>th</sup> graders, I applied for a grant through the Rt. 22 Anti-Gang Task Force and was able to institute the “Skills for Success” program in collaboration with Lafayette College. Collaboration with private entities/individuals should also be encouraged. For example, my friend Mary Sculion recently celebrated 30 years as Founder of Project Home in Philadelphia. At the celebratory dinner this past week, the private benefactors in attendance raised \$10 million dollars in one night for her organization. We need to see more of this in Bethlehem.

As a young child, my family faced financial crisis when my father became very ill and was out of work long-term. My family of 9 would never have survived had it not been for the good will of our community. This experience had a profound impact on me and is one of many reasons I want to be a city councilperson to assure we all work together for the benefit of ALL, regardless of budgetary constraints.