

# Gadfly as soft-gaveler

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government January 21, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on City Government* 

President Waldron values freedom of speech, wants open discussion, and manages with a soft gavel.

And he's taken some heat, with some justification, perhaps.

Gadfly empathizes with, sympathizes with President Waldron.

He ran a classroom that way for fifty years, a department that way for ten years, and tries to run this blog that way now.

Ruling with a hard gavel is much easier.

But not as productive, not as rewarding if building community is part of your goal.

Gadfly has already said a few posts back that he did not personally see President Waldron's managerial style/philosophy as a factor so grave as to disqualify him from the presidency.

He knows from long experience that you do not get through the Shoals of Soft-Gavelment without some bruises, and sometimes serious bruises.

(Ha! If Gadfly wanted a reason for disqualification, it would be that climactic tie-breaking vote after hours and hours of testimony in one of the agonizing chapters of the 2 W. Market saga — a vote given WITHOUT REASON. Aiiii, Mr. President, Gadfly will never forget the feeling of that knife in the heart!)

So Gadfly would shift your focus on the reason for a breakdown in decorum on Council from President Waldron to Councilman Callahan.

In Gadfly's relatively brief tenure, Councilman Callahan has referred to some residents as CAVE people (Citizens against Virtually Everything), publicly revealed a fifteen-year past indiscretion of another resident, mansplain'd a councilwoman, continually implied backstage

maneuvering, suggested unethical behavior by a councilman, suggested unethical behavior by a City administrator, suggested unprofessional behavior by the Mayor, engaged in rude interactions with at least three of the councilpeople, exclaimed derogatorily that he “knew the game” of a councilman, and explained that Council actions against him were conspiratorially orchestrated.

That’s a manload of decorum-busting to handle.

Surely some of the responsibility for the breakdown in decorum and shadowing of the City image that we’ve recently seen some residents forcefully complain about must be attributed to Councilman Callahan.

Gadfly would not assign the whole reason for the breakdown in decorum on the Council and resultant darkening of the City reputation to the soft-gavel management style of President Waldron.

Not by a long-shot.

Gadfly’s been there in his shoes, been there behind his gavel.

The humane impulse of the Soft-Gaveler is to educate, to transform, to absorb the disruptive force. Not to silence or destroy it.

And sometimes it doesn’t work.

But sometimes it does. Gadfly knows from experience.



*The happy, cohesive Lehigh University English Department ca. 1990  
chaired by soft-gloved Gallagher*

And as far as the City's image or reputation goes, Gadfly feels pretty good how the year ended in that respect.

Councilman Callahan's loss of the Parking Authority liaison assignment was, in effect, an [act of censure by Council](#), an act that in Gadfly's mind moved toward improving the City's image and reputation.

An act cousin to the hard-gloved gavel those vocal residents have sought.

Though, since another councilman introduced the motion, whether President Waldron had an active role in that move, he doesn't know.

*to be continued . . .*