

Public Responses to the BPA Parking Fee Proposal: Part 1 (11)

Ed Gallagher, The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues September 24, 2018

(11th in a series of posts on parking)

Dana Grubb, Jack Noname, and Jean Tobias

The Gadfly will divide the responses from the public to the BPA proposal to raise parking meter rates into several posts for sharper focus, and at the end he will summarize the key points and identify the options offered to the \$1.50/hr. meter rate. The Gadfly's notes on each respondent are given below, but you are encouraged to watch the videos and to take your own notes.

Dana Grubb

video 2: min.9-12

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vcuoWDySGY>

video 3: min. 0-4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s2Rpalxkx0>

Rate of inflation since 2012 (last time the meter rate was raised) is 10.8%, but you are asking almost 5 x that.

The referenced problem of equal rates between on-street and off-street parking is a self-inflicted situation, and residents should not be responsible.

“On on-street parking, meter rates are essentially a tax. Their [residents'] streets, and they pay a tax to park on them.”

Part of the reason for the increase is debt service. It is disingenuous that residents are expected to carry debt for garages built in specific instances for development. And also pay to park in garages.

Why aren't we looking at ideas for better ways to market the garages, like free time to bring people in? We have smart meters that can do flexible rates, zone rates.

Fines definitely should be increased. Out-of-town people like our meter and garage rates and don't mind \$10 for a ticket.

TIF funding (Tax Increment Funding) was originally looked at to underwrite costs of garages. TIF is not available now but can be extended. The primary purpose for TIF was public infrastructure, but the money never ended up where it was intended to go – streets and parking facilities. TIF probably could be extended for 5 years and could pay for the Polk St. garage, and residents would not have to worry about higher parking rates.

The impact on small businesses has not been considered. History tells us that the increase to a dollar in 2012 had impact on small businesses. It “drove them out.”

2) Jack [didn't catch last name]

video 3: min. 4-5:40

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s2Rpalxkx0>

Have you done any cost-cutting measures? Now you have 4-door gas-guzzling jeeps, for example.

“This study did nothing on cost-cutting, did it?” [*Answer: “It did not.”*]

Any thought of privatization? [*Answer: “No.”*]

Bottom line: consider cost cutting like we do in our own houses. It could reduce the amount of revenue needed, maybe significantly.

3) Jean Tobias

video 3: min. 5:40-9

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s2Rpalxkxo>

She loves the Mobile App.

She understands the desire for turn-over but is concerned about loss of foot traffic.

Are there any studies from other cities that increased their rates? Did they have the same amount of people visiting, or was there a reduction in foot traffic? [*Question about studies was not answered directly – answered by an “expectation” not studies.*]

Are there studies of the impact of rate increase on small businesses before we go ahead with our increase? [*No answer, I believe.*]

Do we have enough space for off-street parking during “Fests” and Christmas, etc.? [*Answered that the industry standard designs for normal condition.*]

Bottom line: not a “fan” of increasing rates for fear of losing foot traffic and of impact on small businesses. She urged BPA to look at cost cutting.