

## **“ya just had to be there”**

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Serious Issues February 26, 2019

*The writer, known to Gadfly, prefers to remain anonymous. This post refers to comments on the zoning of 134 E. Broad in “[Development doin’s](#).”*

Gadfly:

I was at that ZHB meeting that evening, and I am so glad I went, it was more entertaining than a movie could have been . . . and for free.

I’ll keep it brief now, but, in general, I would agree that there is the appearance that the ZHB is being, as you allude to, as seemingly voting in favor of developers against the zoning ordinance [ZO]. But then I thought, what you can never know statistically is, how well the ZO is really working, because you can never know how many times a potential development idea is shut down by developers and others, doing their diligence, before it even gets to the point of making an application for relief to the ZHB. So by the sheer nature of the ZHB, they are there to hear the “marginal” cases that rose to the top. To draw a similarity to similar systems, you only need to look at our legal system, which gives those found guilty, the right to “appeal” a case.

To the 134 case, I was initially moved to conclude that this was developer overreach, but after the case was argued, I was won over, and agreed with the ZHB. There are so many details left out typically in print, ya just had to be there.

But it wasn’t the 134 case that compelled me to write to you, it was the case that followed, which is what got me there in the first place. That was having to do with a developer, Dominic Villani. What was interesting in that case, argued by Bethlehem Attorney Jim Holzinger, was that in the audience, was none other than Mister X. Turns out, the parcel Villani was wanting to develop, was right next door to where Mister X lives, and because Mister X is a “renter,” he did not have standing at this hearing. Holzinger was quick to point that out to the ZHB but agreed to hear Mister X out when he made his argument AGAINST the project. There were other numerous folks who spoke against the project. But after all was said and done, it became abundantly

clear that Villani's plan, and intent, was a very viable request, so much so, that Mister X got up again, and told the ZHB that after all the testimony, he had changed his mind, and would be OK if the ZHB found in Villani's favor, which they did.

Again, being there was quite compelling, and all around, the professionalism shown by all people in that room that evening made me proud.