

“Where’s the plan?” (37)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues October 12, 2018

(37th in a series of posts on parking)

You know what just about the hardest thing in life to do is?

pause head scratch roll eyes squint (as if you could see the answer)

Gadfly will tell you: to boil down a mountain of information.

Councilwoman Van Wirt and others chant “I want a plan . . . give us a plan . . . show us your plan.”

And Kevin and Tim are sittin’ over there waving their 93-page report, muttering what the hell do they want!

Plan! Here’s your damn plan!

And they did provide shorter rationales along with their proposals on meter rates to the Mayor and fines to President Waldron and Council. I tell you, though, with all that, strange as it is to say, it feels to me like they do not have a plan. Gadfly gets it.

Gadfly does not feel the proposals speak to him as an average resident, a shopper, a tax payer who worries about the price of things. For me (O, you know I’m exaggerating for effect), most of that 93 pages is a blur. And charts give me a headache (no exaggeration).

For Gadfly it’s a communication problem.

I’ve said before on these pages that the first question I ask (asked, sigh) of students in my writing courses was “who is your audience?” And if there are multiple audiences, you might have to write or prepare text for each one.

In this context, substitute “stakeholders” for “audience.”

Gadfly thinks the sense of ships passing in the night may be a communication problem.

Desman/BPA have a mountain of information that needs to be boiled down and targeted to specific audiences.

So Gadfly the penny-pincher imagines a one-page (probably less) executive summary (or maybe there’s another jargon business management term) aimed directly at a cost-conscious resident like he is that succinctly answers 4 questions:

1. here is the increased cost to parkers in Bethlehem
2. here is our estimate of how much money that increased cost will raise

3. here is what we plan to do with that increased revenue
4. here is the benefit you will receive

Almost all other content in the 93-page report is fog to the average resident. Now you may say that audience is Council, but they must see it through the eyes of the average resident. And justify it.

Now that would be MY idea of a plan. One page. Probably less. Then I can wrap my mind around what the proposal means for me.

Right now I'm kinda confused, wandering.

Nine times out of ten when the audience is confused it's the writers's fault (quoth Conan the Grammarian).

Take a look at the topic sentence (topic sentence! some of you haven't heard that since the 6th grade) of the Desman/BPA proposal for the fine increase: "The purpose of this memo is to review and evaluate the City of Bethlehem's parking violation fines in comparison to peer cities."

Yawn.

And one can imagine other like tailored executive summaries, such as to small business owners, or out-of-the-box (Gadfly almost said off the wall) thinkers, etc. –

Or at least talking points memos for meetings made up of diverse audiences that could be put up on a screen as the basis for good conversation.

Gadfly does not think Desman/BPA did enough profitable thinking of how to compel acceptance of their work.

If you are a cost-conscious consumer

If you are a small business owner

Etcetera

Gadfly has been hoping that Desman/BPA is following here on Gadfly and might take this opportunity to post. Perhaps answering my 4 questions.

Gadfly is willing to support the proposal but needs persuasion.

Gadfly has some other ideas stimulated by the Oct 10 meeting about bringing the sides together.