

More info on the BPA meeting on Polk to chew on

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues August 29, 2019

(113th in a series of posts on parking)

There are some things regarding the Bethlehem Parking Authority's choice of the retail/residential component of the Polk Street Garage development that we ought to be chewing on (damn prepositions: "on which we ought to be chewing" is what Gadfly meant to say).

Gadfly likes to lay out the primary sources for you to use to do your own thinking.

Here's the Gadfly audio (10 mins.) of that section of yesterday's BPA Board meeting (BPA has not agreed to move all their meetings to a later time nor move to Town Hall and have meetings live-streamed and archived, but they are now posting audio on their [web site under News](#)):

The Desman consultant to BPA read what he described as an objective analysis of both the Nova and Peron proposals, Board member Ms. Cunningham immediately moved to accept the Peron proposal based on the significant money difference, Board chair Hoffmeier agreed with a few comments, Board member Kounoupis colorfully agreed, and then the Board voted unanimously for Peron.

The left rendering is Nova, the right Peron:



Here's the memo from the City ad hoc committee favoring Nova and stating that "While there is a difference in the offered purchase price,

each proposal has complex financial aspects that should be evaluated by the BPA.” There was no indication of such evaluation, and the Board moved immediately to the Peron proposal because of the purchase price differential.

BPA Proposal Analysis (FINAL)_1

This is the conclusion:

“Both proposals received were comprehensive, thorough and comparable in Proposal and Presentation Format, Planning and Zoning Consistency and Financial Viability. While both entities are experienced, capable and successful, Nova Development has a stronger track record of project completion in the City of Bethlehem and a more desirable building design. The Nova design would add a variety of building styles to the corridor and is inclusive of more desirable design elements. The overall aesthetics, including the stone arches reflecting the ruins and the steel elements, provide an overall stronger relationship to the place in which the building is located. Additionally, Nova Development’s proposed use of the building is more comprehensive, providing commercial opportunities beyond first floor retail and greater opportunity for use by the general public. The proposed roof use of the Nova design, as either an amenity or restaurant, is a significant strength in the proposal and is a large factor in the difference between the two proposals. It is important to note that there was significant discussion around the uniqueness of The Factory Retail and the value that tenant brings to the project. If The Factory Retail is exclusively associated with the Peron/Petrucci proposal, the loss of that opportunity would be considered the largest negative, if the Nova proposal is selected. While there is a difference in the offered purchase price, each proposal has complex financial aspects that should be evaluated by the BPA, including significant variances in contract parking spaces and some uncertainty around the potential for CRIZ increment generation.”

Without such financial evaluation, should the BPA have moved so quickly to accept the Peron proposal?

In any event, should the other positive aspects of the Nova proposal be overshadowed by the dollar signs?

Chew on!