

# Greeting Grace!

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Serious Issues August 7, 2019

*(The latest in a series of posts on City government)*

After saluting Shawn for his service, let's greet Grace Crampsie Smith, who will fill the remainder of Shawn's position before taking over the Council slot to which she was recently elected in January.

Grace steps up early!

Gadfly runs into many people who think City Council is a full-time job. No. Part-time. Time consuming. Large responsibility. And not at pay you get rich on. Truly public service.

Let's welcome Grace!

If you browse through the “[candidates for election](#)” topic on the Gadfly sidebar, you can find a great deal of information about Grace.

Here is her campaign kick-off video: <https://youtu.be/Ihu4kbjthPE>

And here is her answer to a question on development (much in focus on the Gadfly blog these days!) that Gadfly posed to all the candidates:

## **Grace Crampsie Smith**

As a school counselor, within the past 2 years I have seen an astoundingly significant increase in the number



of students and families facing homelessness. This is a direct result of the lack of housing that is affordable and suitable throughout our country and within our communities such as Bethlehem. The disparity between housing costs and income has grown considerably and has received national and local media attention.

Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost-burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. An estimated 12 million renters and homeowner households now pay more than 50 percent of their annual incomes for housing. A family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the United States. Within the Lehigh Valley, 34,000 people pay more than 50% of their income on housing costs.

While development of residential properties is essential, let's examine the disproportion between the development of high-end luxury apartments and condos versus affordable residential units. We are interdependent upon one another and thus must assure that our neighbors have the basic needs of life met, first and foremost, housing that is affordable and suitable.

As I have noted previously, Council members must be mindful that our community is made up of people from all walks of life who have varied incomes, educations, and skills, and we all want the same thing – to provide for our families and have a good quality of life.

Recent initiatives such as the partnership between the Community Action Development Corp. of Bethlehem and the City of Bethlehem to rehab homes on the South Side is promising and needs to be expanded upon.

To further address this issue, I would propose developing a task force of public and private entities as well as securing grant monies. After all, assuring our community members have affordable and suitable housing promotes stronger, safer neighborhoods, which benefits the community at large.