

The 2nd round of arguments on 2 W. (68)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues December 22, 2018

(68th in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St.)

Two days ago Gadfly could only give you the headline:

City Council voted again last night 4-3, just like at first reading, to approve the text amendment regarding 2 W. Market St.

Now let's start a few posts getting behind the headline. Usual procedure for Gadfly, you all will recognize by now (ho-hum), is to lay out all the information first.

So here Gadfly will give you the arguments pro and con presented to the Council members before their second and final vote. Gadfly will roughly summarize each testimony, but, as you also will recognize by now, Gadfly wants you to go to the primary source. So he's making it possible for you to watch and to listen to the actual testimony.

It's almost like being there!

Take advantage. When have you ever had the opportunity to do this on a Council decision? The video and audio lift the veil. Take advantage. Gadfly has another motive, which you may not have yet recognized, in wanting you to watch and listen. A deeper motive that goes far beyond this, though quite important 2 W. Market issue.

Gadfly wants you to see models of democracy in action. The overwhelming majority of Gadfly followers have never been to a Council meeting. Some of you have said to Gadfly that you could never in the world imagine speaking in Council.

Gadfly wants you to engage in the political life of your city. Watch how some of your fellow residents are engaging. See how it's done.

Imagine your butts in those seats.

Imagine yourself at the podium.

Supporting:

Speaking for the petition were Kori Lannon, Sue Glemser, Jerry Kindrachuck, Lorraine Schadt, Mark Schadt, Jean Sieman, a man from Bridlepath Rd., John Ruhle. Mary Mulder, Mike Gosling, Ken Atchison. All but two had spoken before. Several of the presentations were very short. Several character-witness type statements rather than argument per se.

To represent the supporters of the petition, Gadfly has included the presentation by Kori Lannon, daughter of the Rijs and principal in Quadrant, and Sue Glemser and Mark Schadt.

Kori Lannon: <https://videopress.com/v/otOkvShb>

Three salient first-hand truths: 1) substantial opportunity for the house to sell but it didn't 2) always a mixed-use property 3) fate of historic green building in your hands. There's activity at the house all times of day, all days of week, all year. With luminaries the house made a beautiful continuum with other houses in this historic neighborhood. Amendment that encourages this kind of stewardship and investment in an awkward property is good for the house, neighborhood, historic district, and good for the city. Thank you for your realistic and level-headed consideration.

Sue Glemser: <https://videopress.com/v/DM2KgBKf>

Quadrant has made no threats. House up for sale for two years with no buyers. One prospective buyer was chased away by the need for a commercial loan. Who is going to pay a commercial loan for a residential lot. Banks have determined it's commercial. House on a busy corner in downtown Bethlehem will be maintained beautifully for the next 40 years. Even if somebody buys it now, they have to be thinking about the difficulty of selling it to the next person.

Mark Schadt: <https://videopress.com/v/w6ufVCwF>

Mixed use, not sub-dividable, unique property. Doesn't see an avalanche of problems as opposition does. Seems to be no middle ground. Others won't be satisfied. Heels dug in. No compromise. Majority of neighbors have agreed by petition. Commercial area.

Opposing:

Speaking against the petition were Bruce Haines, Romeril father and son, Stephen Antalics, Barbara Diamond, Gadfly, Beall Fowler, Steve Diamond, Tim Stevens, Mary Toulouse, Ron Yoshida. As you might expect, faced with the previous vote against them, the presentations by the opposers were more vigorous, and Gadfly gives them all to you. Mr. Fowler's has already appeared as post #67.

Mary Toulouse: <https://videopress.com/v/NCp1ucYL>

Comparison with White Plains, NY. Don't move into a city. No protections. Urban blight. People lost heart and sold out. Lost confidence in their government. People spooked by threat to most important investment. The city improved. Basis is a strong zoning ordinance. More of a covenant, a promise – governing body and community. Governing body must protect that covenant. In return, people have confidence to invest money and time. Right now the zoning code here seems to be up for grabs. Vote the petition down. Keep the covenant. If change necessary, ask city to put forward process where community is involved. Don't autocratically make this change.

Ron Yoshida: <https://videopress.com/v/LcsDwum4>

Mr. Rij proceeded while suit still in process. Should have waited till case was adjudicated. We all make mistakes, things don't turn out way we hoped. This is remedy to his poor mistake. An end around. Opportunities that can be exploited. Table it till investigated? Idea that there are safeguards violated by what happened later in Dec 4 meeting – the issue at 306 S. New. Contractor knowingly submitted plans in violation. Citizens dubious about claim that all will be well. Start of slippery slope, no, first step already taken.

Steve Diamond: <https://videopress.com/v/7RozSB53>

Basic question: how many properties affected by this change? Still haven't answered that question. Waldron himself called voting without this info would be irresponsible. Can't take petitioner's list. Did City do due diligence? No. Did Ms. Heller do the job? Why did City not attempt to answer the question? Wants to see how the study was done – Sunshine kind of info to see if the story was valid. Is city lazy or negligent? How could Waldron vote if his question not answered? Why did this not come through normal channels of city? City not truthful. Not giving you all information. Malfeasance. Not totally investigating.

Mr. Romeril: <https://videopress.com/v/3Lz4mjX2>

Schadts were meticulous keepers of the house. If chop up the house, yes, it will need repair. Painted every summer. Not completely surrounded by other things. Would make a very fine residential property. Sound piece of property, residential, in a residential block. Schadts raised 4 children there. You can raise a family in this lovely house.

Tim Stevens: <https://videopress.com/v/66zIE3JA>

Don't want a lawsuit. Though sometimes necessary. Threats of group home, etc. Not neighborly. Heller's Dec 3 memo focus – we differ from what she said. Not based on sound premise. Sees problem with current wording. Not fully vetted. Irresponsible. No clarification of true impact on wider city. Other properties are affected. Procedural defect. Other properties should have received notice.

Bruce Haines

Darlene Heller conveniently absent and cannot answer question. Not just one choice, the choice of rewarding of a saved property. Bullied, threatening, holding you hostage. This business doesn't deserve special treatment. The unasked question is why an intelligent business man would buy this property after being defeated. Bad business. Only one answer: had to be another buyer who wanted to use it as a single-family home. Another buyer forced his hand. Political promises made as well to reinforce totally illogical business decision? Our neighborhood totally mischaracterized. Gives specific examples. Deconversions going on for years. Never gave the property a chance to sell. Destroyed the single-family character of the home. Asks for demonstration of integrity of the zoning ordinance.

Martin Romeril: <https://videopress.com/v/1yMudiOt>

Gave the Council a handout. About the zoning code not about people involved. Discusses list given to Council for December 4. Shows properties that would be affected by the new ordinance. Potential widespread use of the ordinance in many neighborhoods. List obviously deficient. Shows more properties that could be affected. Nothing to disqualify these properties under the new ordinance. Shows properties that can be converted to single family. Residential uses can be eliminated. New info presented each meeting. How vote under this situation? Disagrees with the city planner – shows evidence from his list. Can't make property more non-conforming. Simple question: who is the 1% now.

Barbara Diamond: <https://videopress.com/v/BszIQLVp>

Ethics. Concerned about action tarnishing city reputation. Benefit for one well connected individual without due diligence about wider impact. 1) Quadrant turned down twice at Zoning but received approval a third time after making a substantial contribution. 2) Zoning ruling overturned by Commonwealth court and now operating illegally. 3) Proposed change eviscerates the Zoning proposition to make the one property fit in. 4) Mayor at a late time backed the amendment without study. 5) City did no extensive analysis. 6) Planning Commission did not recommend the petition, for the 2 approving members gave no reason. 7) Arguments are subjective, irrelevant to a decision to change Zoning. 8) Public will wonder how “business” is favored. Recent favorable decision to Benner at the same meeting. Questionable grants. Refusal to fight Mr. Brew and Airbnb. Distinct pattern of favorable treatment evident.

Stephen Antalics: <https://videopress.com/v/RBKIDFV7>

Supporters of the amendment – not regular attendees at Council – based their views on work done and saw the opposers as attacking them. Opposers are independent, attend meetings, and their interest is welfare of the community. Interested only in negative impact. Used charts, maps, statistics. Never made personal or subjective comment. Those voting no did so with simple short confident comments. The yes votes are a study in elaborate rationalization. Yes voters not comfortable, long in justifying. Yes voters should examine conscience, place hand on a Bible. Urge you to recant and say no.

Ed Gallagher: <https://videopress.com/v/jXaBHRO>

Basis for a great movie. Mr. Rij is living exemplar of the American Dream. Came as immigrant in the bottom of a boat and has risen to great wealth. But this is a court of law, so to speak, and not a theater. And decision must be fair, impartial, objective. Decision must be based on quality of argument. Those opposed are far superior on that score.

Now we'll move on to presenting the votes by Council members and, maybe even more importantly, their supporting statements. And we should be thinking about models of behavior there as well. Not that you might run for office. But you will be voting.