

Other Council members show warm heart, healthy hope, and a good head

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Ethics, Serious Issues December 9, 2019

🧙 *Latest in a series of posts on Ethics and City Government* 🧙

Councilman Callahan suggests the possibility of unethical behavior. The Mayor calls him out at a Council meeting. Councilman Callahan returns the favor before the press. Council reprimands Councilman Callahan.

It ain't over.

The Mayor mentioned sending some sort of letter to Councilman Callahan. Councilman Callahan is the “comeback kid.” He doesn't give up.

It ain't over.

We've got serious controversy cookin' here.

The reputations of Mayor Donchez, Councilman Callahan, the head of the Department of Community and Economic Development Alicia Miller Karner, *and the City itself* are out on a limb.

And the significance of the situation is compounded by the fact that the main antagonists — Councilman Callahan and Councilman Reynolds — may both be candidates for Mayor next time 'round.

Gadfly has said we can learn a lot about leadership qualities from the way people respond to a controversy like this.

Stress reveals the person.

Crisis reveals character.

This is a great opportunity to see what people are made of.

And who might make a great next Mayor.

So we have seen Councilman Callahan and Councilman Reynolds go at it virtually head-to-head and thus have had opportunity to judge their leadership qualities.

What about the rest of Council?

Councilmembers Negron and Colon were silent on the ethics issue at the December 3 meeting, which is not too surprising. Both are normally on the quiet side. In Gadfly's experience, neither is glib, neither compulsively seeks the spotlight, neither needlessly repeats what's already been said. Negron voted for the motion, Colon sided with Councilman Callahan, but since both were silent, we cannot know what they were thinking.

However, there's an interesting range in the responses of the other three Councilmembers, though none touched directly on the central ethical issues of the controversy. Councilwoman Van Wirt apologized to AMK, Councilwoman Crampsie Smith tried to patch the wounds of Callahan's removal and move Council forward peacefully and cooperatively, and Councilman Waldron — *President* Waldron — looked at the business side of things: listing the available City mechanisms to handle suggestions of unethical behavior and identifying an obstacle to productive discussion.

Van Wirt showed warm heart, Crampsie Smith healthy hope, and Waldron a good head.

Take this opportunity to complete the circuit of this first round of responses after Councilman Callahan's challenging press conference.

Listen below.

Paige Van Wirt:

<https://youtu.be/v7kFcn3X9bU>

- This is a tawdry, tawdry business.
- And we have such better things here in Bethlehem.
- So the first thing I wanted to say is Ms. Karner, I am so deeply sorry for what you have gone through.
- We have not always seen eye-to-eye on everything, but this is not how we would treat our City employees who are doing a good job.
- And while I can't speak for the rest of Council, I think I do in saying we are deeply sorry for what you have been through here.
- And thank you for your service to the City.

Grace Crampsie Smith:

<https://youtu.be/NoutpJu8hLA>

- In my high school . . . our motto is our diversity is our strength.
- We have students from all over the world, and it's just wonderful to see the differences in students and co-workers on a daily basis.
- And I think that here on Council and in our City our diversity is our strength.
- We all come from different backgrounds and different frame of references, and that's ok.
- At the same time, we need to recognize that our diversity is strong, but our similarity is a bond that keeps us together.
- Our similarities are such that we all love this great City, and we want what's best.

- And we all have the privilege and honor to have been voted to represent the City, the citizens of this great City.
- So that being said, I really hope that moving forward, we can value our diversity, respect each other, treat each other, every one in this room with professionalism and appropriateness.

Adam Waldron:

<https://youtu.be/X8WAutzoAmk>

- There is a whistleblower protection in place.
- It's not something that has to be done on a case-by-case basis, it's automatic.
- We have an H.R. department that investigates those issues.
- There is a policy in place . . . There is a system, and as far as I can tell, it is working.
- To bring in the state ethics board . . . I don't think is necessary.
- Additionally, we have a Controller anonymous tip-line.
- There is many different outlets . . . there are outlets within the City that do function and serve the purpose of some of the issues that have been brought up tonight.
- So I don't think we really need to talk about why the system is broken.
- I think the process and policies in place are fair.
- (Speaking now to Councilman Callahan) There are three different issues . . . they get conflated, interwoven, and interchanged at the convenience of you.
- And I think when that happens, it muddies the waters, and those issues can't be handled individually.
- So it's a bit confusing to follow along.

to be continued . . .

