

Letter to the City: health concerns associated with the Martin Tower demolition (32)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Martin Tower, Serious Issues May 6, 2019

(32nd in a series on Martin Tower)

Informational meeting

Thursday, May 9, 6PM

Nitschmann Middle School

Robert Novatnack

May 6, 2019

Emergency Management Coordinator

City of Bethlehem

Subject: Martin Tower Demolition

Bob:

Many of us are quite concerned about the possible health consequences of the Martin Tower demolition planned for May 19.

Here attached is a list of questions I compiled from followers of the Bethlehem Gadfly blog. We are hoping that the presentations at the meeting May 9 will provide answers to these questions.

We would appreciate prior public notice about the format of the meeting, such as who will be presenting, who others will be “up front,” what the structure will be, and what the plans are for audience participation.

Our questions are in a logical and chronological order under nine headings, which may, in fact, serve as a sensible way of focusing and structuring the meeting.

Ample time for audience participation is crucial, and we suggest a time for direct questions and answers, not just the one-sided communication that characterizes participation at City Council meetings.

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The Bethlehem Gadfly

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cc: Mayor Donchez, City Council President Waldron

QUESTIONS FOR THE MAY 9 MEETING ON THE MARTIN TOWER DEMOLITION

Preliminary Planning:

- What options besides implosion are available for demolition?
- Why (according to the newspaper) is implosion used only 1% of the time?

- What factors (time, cost, efficiency, geography, etc.) made implosion the best option for MT?
- Where did potential health hazards factor in to the decision? Is it fair to say that other options would provide less of a health hazard?
- Was the City involved in the planning decision? If so, name those City officials involved. If so, what role did the City play in the decision? If so, did the City have a veto power?
- Was there any disagreement about the decision to use implosion among any of those consulted in the planning decision? If so, who and for what reason?
- Is it too late to choose another option for demolition?

The Regulatory Process:

- What Federal and State laws, regulations, and guidelines govern implosions?
- What Federal and State approvals had to be obtained? What offices, where located, and who were the principal government agents consulted and responsible for approvals?
- What City laws, regulations, and guidelines govern implosions?
- What City approvals had to be obtained? What City offices were consulted and were responsible for the approvals? Who were the key figures in the approval process?
- What information had to be submitted to the City in order to obtain approval?
- Were there any disagreements or concerns voiced by City officials during the approval process? If so, who and for what reason?

- What Federal, State, and City laws, regulations, and guidelines specifically relate to health concerns? Where in the regulations are health concerns addressed?
- Did the City do its own background check on Controlled Demolition, Inc.? Did the City solicit references? If not, why not? If so, were there any concerns or, more importantly, “red flags”? What was the last job similar in nature and scope to Bethlehem? Who was responsible for the vetting of CD?
- Did City officials meet with the developer and/or CD during the approval process? Elaborate.
- Did City officials research prior implosions by CD for health protocols and health consequences? Did CD provide testing data post-demolition in previous cases?
- Are there any City officials with prior expertise or experiences in implosions?
- What in the history of demolition in Bethlehem, imploded or otherwise, was pertinent to consideration of MT?
- What pertinent independent general studies of the health consequences of implosions were studied by the City?

Possible contamination:

- Is there any asbestos on site? What tests have been done? Where are the results available? Is there independent verification of what asbestos is onsite? If there is asbestos, what will be done to control it?
- Are there other contaminants onsite? What are their health effects?
- What will the fallout, the “dust” that the implosion raises contain?

- Will the developer remove and safely dispose of any building components containing lead and other known contaminants before demolition?
- Has a fallout zone been determined? Where will the fallout be most intense? How far will the fallout spread?
- Will there be tests to determine the range and intensity of the fallout? If so, who will do them? Will there be independent tests? Where and when will the test results be available?
- Will there be tests of indoor air quality?
- What health effects can we expect from “normal” fallout? What is a worst-case scenario? Are there long-term studies of fallout health consequences after implosions?
- What will be the effect on the Monocacy Creek? Won’t the water cannons used to suppress the dust wash contamination into the Creek?

Preparation of the townspeople:

- Should people be worried about health consequences? If so, what should they do to avoid or to mitigate those consequences?
- Should people with certain health conditions take certain precautions or avoid the area for a period of time?
- Do you recommend face masks?
- Has the city made arrangements to ensure that community residents within the fallout zone are provided with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuums and “tack mats,” which remove dust from shoes as individuals enter the home?
- Should homes be sealed up?
- Will dust lay on cars, outdoor furniture, and so forth, and, if so, should anything be done?

- Should people be told to avoid lawn mowers, blowers, etc., for a time – things that stir up the dust?
- Should people be kept off the Little League fields, off the Golf course, out of Burnside, from shopping at Lowe's, and so forth, for the day?
- Should people be advised to restrict any kind of activity or to avoid any locations?
- Has the city made arrangements to ensure that residents, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and city agencies are fully informed about the potential health hazards from dust from the demolition and who to contact if they believe they have been exposed?
- Has the city made arrangements to ensure training of community block monitors to assist residents with questions and home safety measures?

Demolition day operation:

- Who is in charge of the operation that day? Who is calling the shots? Does the City have any say in the operation? What officials will be on site?
- What factors will determine that the demolition is "a go"?
- What factors would determine a delay or a cancellation of the demolition?
- What could go wrong? What could seriously go wrong? What is a worst-case scenario?
- Is wind speed and direction a factor in whether to go or not? Is there such a thing as a desirable and undesirable speed or direction? Or is it "anything goes"?

Post-demolition testing:

- Will there be tests to determine the range and intensity of the fallout? If so, who will do them? Will there be independent tests? Where and when will the test results be available?
- In addition to air-quality tests, will there be seismic monitoring, to determine possible impact on building foundations and so forth?
- Has the city made arrangements for independent testing of the streets and sidewalks surrounding demolished properties to measure the impact of demolition and debris removal on the local environment, and to repeat such tests when clearing the site has been completed?

Post-demolition clean-up:

- Has the city made arrangements to ensure that all sidewalks, streets, and parking lots in the fallout zone are swept immediately after the demolition and again when debris has been removed?
- Has the city made arrangements to ensure the developer will cover all dust & debris on the demolition site so it will not be carried off by wind or rain AND require it all to be completely removed as rapidly as possible?
- Has the city made arrangements to ensure that two inches of topsoil are removed and replaced on all exposed ground within the fallout area?
- Has the city made made arrangements to ensure the developer has established procedures for safe removal of all debris from demolished buildings, including use of hoses to suppress dust and covering trucks?

- Do we have to wait for rain to be totally safe?
- Will it be safe to use the Little League fields, play golf, visit Burnside, use compost, and etc.?

Cost to taxpayers:

- Who is paying for all the city time and personnel involved here?

Long-term view:

- People will eventually live, work, visit at the MT site. What safeguards will be put in place to protect their health?
- Are we learning anything in this process about such things as City-citizen communication and the efficacy of our various laws, regulations, and guidelines that we would want to change as a result of this MT experience?