

Observations on the Martin Tower Implosion Meeting (43)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Martin Tower, Serious Issues May 10, 2019

(43rd in a series on Martin Tower)

Martin Tower demolition May 19

www.martintowerbethlehem.com

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Successes:

- 1) Bob Novatnack (meeting moderator and emergency manager): the best thing about this implosion that the city has going for it.
- 2) Clear message that CITIZENS SHOULD STAY INSIDE DURING AND AFTER THE IMPLOSION. THIS IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT EVENT.
- 3) Council members Negron and Van Wirt, who effectively amplified the views of many citizens in advocating that the mayor respond to public concern about the implosion.

Failures:

1) There were no public health officials on the panel. The person from the city's health department only spoke from the audience when a citizen demanded it. She lacked any concern for the composition of the dust, despite a medical doctor who studies dead people explaining the potential impact of cement dust on people's lungs. When asked how we would know if the dust had a negative impact, she said epidemiological studies could reveal that in 15 years or so. How comforting!

2) Minimal data will be gathered on the chemical composition of the particles and in order to see any of the air quality data, citizens will have to request the DEP send them a file. This data should be posted on the city's website and put in an accessible form by the city.

3) No one addressed the secondary dust events due to street/sidewalk sweeping and how dangerous and long-lasting those will be.

4) No one will do any actual monitoring of the water quality of Monocacy Creek so we know if and how the implosion will impact the water. The demolition company simply has some mechanisms for controlling runoff from smaller events that have happened throughout the last year related to the smaller building demolitions. Citizens have no way of knowing whether these capturing devices are working. We are supposed to take the demolition company's word for it.

5) The demolition company made a rather dubious argument that implosion is safer than dismantling because no one is in the building (presumably workers doing the disassembling) and because it concentrates the dust created all at one time (vs. spreading it out over a longer dismantling period). The obvious question is "safer for whom?" My concern is the city residents, not people working for a demolition company. And please show me some data to support the absurd claim that dust created from dismantling is in aggregate equivalent to dust

created from implosion. If you are creating the same amount of dust, you are probably not doing a very good job at your dismantling.

6) The city encouraged viewing the implosion as spectator sport until there was public outcry.

7) The city failed to convey the precautionary message to stay inside during and after the implosion, until the public meeting, when the demolition company's equivocating on the issue was finally addressed with a clear statement.

8) It is blatantly obvious that the implosion is being done to save the developers of the property money at citizens' expense.

9) Why has an implosion even been planned when a blast permit has not yet been issued?

10) Many people are not upset about how the city is handling the implosion but, instead, with how the city is managing the property's use. It was rezoned to benefit the property owners, and will be destroying an iconic part of our city's history, only to replace it with traffic causing generic luxury housing and retail that competes with existing local businesses. The word "travesty" was appropriately used to convey the city's failure.

Breena

Gadfly invites other observations from followers who attended the meeting. They don't necessarily have to be lengthy, for Gadfly will compile shorter ones.