

A plan to get a plan (3)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environmental Advisory Council, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues December 10, 2018

(3rd in a series of posts on the Climate Action Plan)

Note: see “our” Martha Christine (“Bipartisan efforts in Congress may actually address climate change.” Morning Call, December 9, 2018) calling attention to a [bipartisan bill](#) designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and asking us to advise Susan Wild that we need her support.

Gadfly misspoke in his first post on a Bethlehem CAP t’other day. We don’t actually have a Climate Action Plan yet. But we have a plan to get a plan. And soon.

Gadfly is not going to jump directly into CM Reynolds’ December 4 CAP meeting about getting that plan.

Because he wants us to think first about the idea of a “plan” in general. About the importance of planning. About the need for a planner or planners.

In *Sirens of Titan*, Kurt Vonnegut (anybody read him anymore? Sigh) says, “There is no reason why good cannot triumph as often as evil. **The triumph of anything is a matter of organization.**”

Sounds trite, but we must know that we can do something good (act) about, say, the evil greenhouse gas emissions if we plan, if we organize.

Since Gadfly went into business he meets people who say, forget it, Gadfly, what does it all matter, nothing happens. People who are down on the possibility of good things happening, of important things getting done.

I’m thinking of one follower in particular. You know who you are.

So Gadfly would like to create a sense of optimism by stepping back in time 2-3 years to the genesis of CM Reynolds’ CAP initiative. To see the vision at the beginning or near the beginning (probably deeper roots than this) and follow the developing steps of the plan to achieve the CAP.

Things have been happening. We need to sense the motion. To see the “there” that got us “here.” To feel momentum moving us forward. And therefore to feel good.

So here from maybe a couple years ago is an early Reynolds’ articulation of what a CAP is all about that helped get the ball rolling. Reynolds outlines a “process” (plan) that includes the formation of a working group.

William Reynolds

**Bethlehem City Council President
from “Bethlehem 2017”**

Climate Action Plan

In August of 2006, Mayor John Callahan signed the Three City Climate Protection Agreement with the Mayors of Allentown and Easton. The agreement established a goal of reducing the City's operational carbon footprint 20% by 2012. Through the excellent work of the Callahan Administration and the employees of the City of Bethlehem, the City actually exceeded its goal and reduced its sum of greenhouse gas emissions by 28% during that time period.

On February 18, 2014 and August 28, 2014, memos were sent to Mayor Donchez asking the City Administration to establish new goals relating to reducing the City of Bethlehem's carbon footprint. Our Parks and Public Property Director, Ralph Carp, sent memos on March 18, 2014, September 5, 2014, and February 13, 2015 outlining the impressive efforts that Bethlehem has taken in the past 10 years to reduce its carbon footprint and increase our energy efficiency. These efforts include the completion and implementation of \$5,000,000 in energy conservation measures that will continue to produce financial and environmental dividends in the coming years.

At the February 17, 2015, Human Resources and Environment Committee Hearing, multiple members of Council indicated to Mr. Carp that they were looking for a formal presentation of goals (future goal of GHG reduction, etc.) or a cooperative agreement to be signed between the Administration and City Council setting benchmarks/goals for the future. No formal goals or cooperative agreement have been introduced or enacted into. Resolution #1 outlines a process by which the City of Bethlehem will enact and follow a Climate Action Plan for the City of Bethlehem.

Many cities throughout the country have also set up programs, policies, goals, etc. for their whole cities, not just their governmental operations. Once we are able to collect our data, set goals, and formalize a City of Bethlehem internal agreement, it would be wise to turn outside of City of Bethlehem operations. We need to take a look at how we can share the practices and policies that we use across the whole City with our businesses, community institutions, and residents.

What is a Climate Action Plan? A **Climate Action Plan** (CAP) is a set of strategies intended to guide efforts for climate change mitigation. Hundreds of small, mid, and large cities across the country have created CAPs as the threat of climate change has appeared to have increased in recent years. How does a city create a CAP? A city collects their data on greenhouse gas emissions and plans accordingly on ways to reduce those emissions. Establishing a new goal of GHG reduction, departmental energy reduction plans, and establishing data

collection procedures to allow businesses and community members to monitor their carbon footprint are all common aspects of Climate Action Plans.

Why do we need to formally set up a Climate Action Plan? For many reasons, it is important that we set up a structure to continue to monitor and achieve energy efficiency goals for the City of Bethlehem. Formal goals allow the City of Bethlehem an opportunity to create a comprehensive strategy to guide decisions for the future. Creating formal goals also increases the likelihood that City Council (who passes the budget) will understand and react to the need to fund the necessary investments needed to reduce our carbon footprint.

How do we set up a Climate Action Plan? We follow the lead of other cities. Attached is Resolution #1 that creates a Climate Action Plan Work Group within the City of Bethlehem including representatives of the Administration, City Council, the Environmental Advisory Council, and members of the community. The CAP Work Group would look to create formal goals designed to reduce our carbon footprint, alter internal energy usage practices, encourage employee behavior change as it relates to energy, and set a community example as it relates to environmental protection.

It's Monday, December 10, do you know where your local Climate Action Plan is?