

A modest proposal: the more the merrier

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Modest proposals, Serious Issues January 20, 2019
(2nd in a series of modest proposals)

Gadfly has been reading back through distant past meeting minutes and newspaper archives and has noted in passing that there seemed to be a time when, for instance, the executive director of the Bethlehem Parking Authority attended Council meetings.

Gadfly's not sure if that was on a regular basis or just special occasions. But it struck him that some such attendance and reporting would be a good idea.

And not just the Parking Authority but all the “independent” authorities: Redevelopment Authority, Housing Authority, Bethlehem Authority. Maybe even the Environmental Advisory Council and Backyards for Wildlife that are identified under “Authorities and Boards” on the City web site. Maybe even important players like BRIA.

As the unofficial official representative of the public, Gadfly hungers for information.

Maybe Council needs information too. Council members might receive minutes from meetings of these groups, and that is good if so. But some personal contact would be better. There is a Council liaison to the Parking Authority (there may be liaisons to other Authorities, not sure), for instance, but he has not attended a meeting as far back as the publicly available minutes December 2017, though he has said he keeps in phone contact with the Board chair. A couple months ago there was some question about an action by the Redevelopment Authority when “no one” from Council was there.

The City Council meeting is “our” only regular, centralized, top-level meeting. It is the public face of city government.

Gadfly wonders if the City Council meeting could be thought of (to change the metaphor) as the hub of the wheel of City governance – the one place at which if a resident paid regular attention (now via tv!), he or she could have a reasonable understanding of what's happening along the various spokes. Hence, a modest proposal:

that the half-dozen or so “independent” Authorities be requested to attend at least two City Council meetings per year, once in the first six months and once in the second, to report on current activities and future plans and to receive comments and questions from both Council members and the general public.



(As the new year begins, Gadfly has been thinking of adding some new occasional yet regular features, such as this one called “Modest Proposals.” Things – even really small things – that we’d like to see happen. Gadfly invites you to contribute your modest proposals.)