

Hardball (3)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Uncategorized May 1, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on candidates for election* 

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from Greg Zahm

First, in response to the Grubb campaign Mailer of last week, how many can say they have served the city equally to either Dana Grubb or Willie Reynolds? I have served as a teacher for 16 years in this my home town (eight more between NYC and Easton) – much less than many have given to Bethlehem, and also *not* in a city-wide capacity. Children’s education and small-scale intervention in their lives have been quite enough responsibility. Having said these things, our city – all of it – needs our help.

I can say unequivocally that I do not like the tenor of Dana Grubb’s “hardball” mailer – some of what he’s saying and much of the *way* he’s saying what he’s saying: **“It’s no one’s “turn” to be Mayor: It should be the CHOICE of the people!”**

Mr. Grubb, it is already the people’s choice. This statement is manipulative.. It’s “said” publicly (rather than behind the scenes), but in a forum where many reading it cannot interact with others to digest it with thorough and informed consideration.

And, while I want to admire the *spirit* of **“It’s time to break the cycle of “graduating” members of City Council to the Office of Mayor”** – of COURSE not – where is the substantiation of this implication? I find it cheap and offensive. CAN it be substantiated? And, is the bigger implication intended that “anyone who really matters” should simply agree? Alas, it too is public . . . and done.

And now, there is Willie Reynolds’ mailer (of Friday, April 30) comparing Mr. Grubb to the most recent ex-president, due to one – albeit concerning, but investigated, explained, and resolved – event. (And is the picture supposed to be derogatory? Meh.)

How many *more* physical altercations has Mr. Grubb had? Has he been charged for any? (Has Mr. Reynolds?) I have heard of none. On what facts does Mr. Reynolds challenge Mr. Grubb in the mailer? One. I agree that the last four years have essentially been the absence of federal leadership. That, however, does not translate so easily to Mr Grubb. Arguably, this is equally if not more disappointing than Mr. Grubb's innuendo.

Now, to the "facts" of Mr. Grubb's mailer.

No resident wants to see personal taxes raised – EVER. Amid a pandemic? Yes, that IS very concerning.

What explanation was given by Council and Mayor Donchez for not finding another solution? (Perhaps I did not attend enough to gather that answer.)

Would you say it was a lack of vision and leadership? Failure to apply sufficiently for grants (an area of your apparent expertise), as, Mr. Grubb, you implied at the Church of the Manger forum? And/or was it a lack of compassion – all the way around, including at the State and Federal levels?

But, what did YOU propose to solve the revenue shortfall, Mr. Grubb? Did you come forward at the time and share your wisdom? Or, what do you have to say NOW about what *should* have been the solution then? (Grants, cutting personnel AND expanding the tax base?) I hear you criticizing, but WHERE WAS YOUR LEADERSHIP? Then again, I only occasionally attend Council meetings. (Having that experience, I think I can accurately state that most residents do not attend at all.)

I did attend the Church of the Manger event Monday. Based on your statements there, should it be assumed that you, Mr. Grubb, would have already acquired the millions in grants to weather this current terrible storm, or would you have re-organized City Hall AND cut more staffing – that Mr. Reynolds suggests is already at an all-time low?

And speaking of "storms" – sort of, was Climate Change – and other/related anthropogenic disasters such as the current mass extinction – not important enough to make the mailer? Improving parks

has made it to the top of your list, but what about the current and predicted impacts of environmental inequities on poor and minority communities/residents? Have you really addressed this? Do I *digress*?

Back to Mr. Reynolds. Unhappily, I am very familiar with the avoidance of answering questions over the past year by Council – including mayoral candidate Mr. Reynolds – and current Mayor Donchez.

I asked council (and the Mayor) multiple times during meetings since last summer and via email why they were failing to hold *EVEN ONE MINUTE* of discussion on the topic of reevaluating the police budget, an issue critical to many residents. Doing so then was – and *STILL IS NOW* – their responsibility to the residents!

When Mr. Reynolds agreed to discuss this question with me after the Church of the Manger event he said the reason it wasn't discussed by council or the Mayor was because . . . no one wanted to discuss it. City Council and Mayor Donchez, according to Mr. Reynolds, did not *WANT* to discuss this significant demand made by much of the public. (Mr. Reynolds, you still have not explained why you never responded to my question and emails.)

I reminded Mr. Reynolds then – as I do readers, now – that “Accountability” and “Advocacy” on behalf of ALL residents, an “Open Bethlehem,” and a “Responsive City Government” are the highlights of his mayoral platform on the web.

So, the public's demand for budget reevaluation – and my inquiries/correspondences about simply *discussing* the demands of so many residents – *REMAIN* unmet and unanswered, *MONTHS* later!

Council and the Mayor failed to advocate for *MUCH* of the public on this issue, but not for *ALL* of the public.

Some residents (lead by the Bethlehem “Good” Neighbors Alliance) berated any councilperson as a “radical leftist” and as literally wanting to overthrow the government for even considering doing their job of discussing the police budget.

The result? Council – and our Mayor – failed to hold ANY discussion, yielding to threatening and fear-mongering of one loud minority. NOT ONE motion to discuss was made in council.

In retrospect, after the Jan 6 attack on the US Capital, perhaps they felt legitimate fear.

Nonetheless, the problem seems to be that we have skilled politicians when we need more leadership.

Shouldn't leaders, when elected, represent ALL and hold the difficult discussions, ESPECIALLY with those who voted against them or who disapproved of their actions? And, as human beings, acknowledge their mistakes? Even as late as now? (Or explain why it wasn't a mistake?)

Is a *politician* one who avoids difficult situations and represents those who did – *or would* – give them their vote, and *calls* it leadership? And, once elected, is staying elected the goal? (I think I am channeling Mr. Grubb.) This IS a legitimate concern.

Are my complaints “sour grapes”? Well, these grapes are bitter at the lack of representation that occurred – *and continues*, but also for the apparent lack of courage and Leadership that remains.

And then a campaign taking money from developers? Has “Even the appearance of impropriety” gone out the window? This is clearly a conflict of interest.

And, that ethics ordinance? Delayed? Forgotten? Or buried? Is *that* an example of advocating for residents? Is it not apparent after the last year – four years? – that it is critical?

I repeatedly remind myself of the service given by those in leadership positions, certainly by both of these men. We are all flawed. Mr. Grubb has explained his role in the fight that led to his forced retirement. He's owned that – not run from it, and I believe that reflects character. The lack of representation described above, and its continued avoidance are disqualifying to me. I NEED to hear publicly – all of our Bethlehem family deserves to hear – that that has been acknowledged AND

DISCUSSED publicly, in order to continue considering Willie Reynolds as a candidate.

Mr. Reynolds, you are still somewhat unknown to me. I spoke to you after the Church of the Manger Forum and shared my concerns in person and honestly – after the many digital attempts. Answer ALL of your constituents' concerns, as a councilperson. You, like the current Mayor, work for each of them.

Mr. Grubb, you are largely unknown to me. As one asking to lead, you have not addressed – certainly not with clarity and depth – a number of the above issues.

Truly,

Greg Zahm

Hopeful Human, Advocate for All Species, Teacher, Parent, Husband, Brother, Son (of a Native Son), AND one who aspires to leaving a place better than he finds it (thanks first to my childhood baseball coaches Mr. D. Horst and Mr. B. Kresge)