

The questions call for facts, clarity, and focus. (51)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues October 23, 2018

(51st in a series of posts on parking)

Waldron Questions to BPA

Been a week since the BPA called time-out because City Council President Waldron requested answers to a list of questions before considering the BPA proposal for an increase in fines. (post #48)
Been a week since Gadfly provided you with Councilman Callahan's vigorous objections to that action as unnecessary in terms of content and unfair in terms of timing. (post #49)

One week. Time for things to cool a bit. Gadfly had the damn runs the day of the proposed vote Oct 16. Not funny. Better now.

Gadfly passed the 14-question list on to you in post #48 but hadn't looked at it. Till today.

Step back for a moment. Post #40. Where Gadfly starts to sum up his feelings on the whole process he followed religiously from mid-September on.

Here's how that summing up went:

- the Bethlehem Parking Authority is a slippery devil
- Gadfly has been thinking about where he stands. Earlier he used the term "confused." Today he's thinking "twisted."
- Gadfly could live with a \$1.50/hr. meter rate, though realizing that could be a hardship on some or even many. And Gadfly has no trouble with the fine increases. Gadfly might even go along with new Walnut St. and Polk St. garages.
- So why does Gadfly feel twisted?
- Because of the disingenuous way the BPA presented its case, and the condescending view of its audience ("us," Gadfly followers) contained in that presentation.
- Gadfly finds himself in the curious position of willing to accept the message while being repelled by the actions of the messenger.
- Gadfly finds himself in the "revoltin'" position of hoping Council can do something, if not to deny the BPA proposal, but to force it to recognize how it has acted.

And now let's stop again for a moment and remember that we're talking about "real money" (Gadfly loves that scene in the "Wall Street" movie where solid and prudent father Martin Sheen is peeling off dollars for his wastrel son Charlie Sheen, saying, a few dollars here, few dollars there, and soon it adds up to real money): 20 million for a new Walnut St. Garage, soon \$880,000/yr. debt service for the New St. Garage, millions for a Polk St. Garage. Real money.

So Gadfly looks at the 14 questions today and finds exactly what he felt was needed.

Waldron Questions to BPA

The questions call for facts, clarity, and focus.

While Gadfly was having the runs on Oct 16, he was wondering what he might say in public comment given a chance before the vote.

He was going to say that the Ghost haunting this whole process is the Polk St. Garage.

Has the decision to build a Polk St. Garage been made or not?

From the documents presented, Gadfly could never seem to get an answer straight in his mind.

Gadfly has only really been "paying attention" since he received his buzz in mid-September, but he was aware even in his cocoon stage that the question of "garages" was an open wound.

It shouldn't have taken a public relations consultant for the BPA to figure that out.

And that concern should have been addressed.

Instead, it was muted, hidden – even, dare I say, falsified.

Gadfly is always trying to boil down mountains of info into manageable pieces that will crystallize understanding, his own understanding.

Here's what he came up with as representative of his overall problem with the Desman report and BPA attitude.

Parking fines

In the Desman consultant memo of Sept. 13 presented as justification for the fine increases attached to BPA's Sept 24 letter to President Waldron requesting Council to act on the proposal (phew! not a well constructed sentence so far), we learn the exact amount of the handicapped violation fine in New Brunswick and the exact duration prior to late payment penalty in Wilmington but NOT that the decision to build a multi-million-dollar garage here on Polk St. had definitely been made.

Gadfly got a lot of minute detail on what he really didn't need to know all that much about and nothing on what is crucial to know.

Gadfly reads everything closely. English profs read closely. And was confused, twisted.

If we need a Polk St. garage, say so, make the case – Gadfly is ready to go along.

But the Gadfly felt he was being treated as if he couldn't pay attention. Gadfly could be far wrong – he's always willing to be whacked upside the head or have his finger put in the pencil-sharpener (good Catholic guilt) – but the impression he got was that the BPA isn't used to being questioned.

To Gadfly's mind there was not one document in this process that "spoke" cleanly and straight-forwardly to "the public."

Maybe the BPA does in a case like this exactly need a PR person to shape palatable and persuasive proposals responsible to multiple and legitimate concerns in an obviously contested atmosphere.

I don't know where this will end. Political strategy is far above Gadfly's pay grade. But I think what President Waldron and Council did was eminently fair. And Gadfly refers you to his 7 "exhibits" for supporting evidence to show you how he reached that conclusion.

(By the way, as promised, Gadfly has done some research into the conjoined twins – fees and fines separately funded – and has an answer. Will be writing about it soon.)