

The City does have a whistleblower protection policy, but . . .

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Ethics December 14, 2019

 Latest in a series of posts on Ethics and City Government 

Here's a good review of the latest developments in what Gadfly has been calling the ethics case (see [Ethics](#) under Topics on the sidebar for all the posts in this thread):

[Douglas Graves, "Conflict with city hall costs Callahan." Bethlehem Press, December 11, 2019.](#)

So Gadfly has had one eye on the past in this ethics controversy. That is, why did the 3 City employees troubled by alleged official encouragement of inspectors to delay the issuance of permits feel they had to go to Councilman Callahan? Did they not have other options within the City system that might have avoided the "contentious spectacle" that we are experiencing?

As we detailed two posts ago in this series, President Waldron pointed out two options: one through the City Human Resources department, the other the [Controller hotline](#).

And as we also detailed in that previous post, the location of a hotline on the Controller web site is not prominently visible, though a hotline is appropriate there because the Controller is an independent official, a step outside the City structure, and thus, on the surface, a more objective investigator. But perhaps more importantly, the voice record on the

hotline might not ensure the kind of privacy essential when it comes to employees reporting wrongs.

Here's what we've been able to determine so far about the City Human Resources procedures regarding whistleblowing:

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION POLICY

It is a prohibited personnel practice for any employee of the City of Bethlehem who directs or exercises any authority within the City to threaten, harass, dismiss, retaliate against, or discriminate against another employee because of whistleblowing activities that are taken, planned or required by a local, state, or federal authority. Whistleblowing means disclosing information that you reasonably and in good faith believe is evidence of a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

Employees who believe they have been subject to personnel actions due to their whistleblowing activities should report this to the Human Resources Director or Compliance Officer. Complaints will be investigated in accordance with the City's Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy.

This policy applies after the fact of whistleblowing. There is nothing about how to blow the whistle, who investigates the whistleblowing, or how the whistleblower's privacy is protected.

Important matters.

Thus, as Gadfly noted in that previous post, he doesn't share President Waldron's confidence that City structures in place are adequate enough.

So Gadfly's one eye on the past is simultaneously an eye on the future. (How is that possible silly Gadfly?)

We want to avoid the present spectacle in the future.

So the proper people should be using this occasion to think hard about whether we need some specific policy and practice changes in the City Hall administrative structure.

Now Gadfly's other eye is on the present and will be looking to see if we learn about new developments at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

Will the allegations of an improper slowdown and/or the improper behavior with the Parking Authority be forwarded to the State Ethics Commission? Or is there some plan to investigate them at the local level?