

A big step toward clearing the air about the Polk St. Garage (69)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues November 10, 2018

(69th in a series of posts on parking)

[The Mayor's statement \(5 mins.\)](#) video

[Mayor on BPA 11-07-18](#) text

[Councilman Reynold's follow-up to the Mayor \(12 mins.\)](#) video

So let's pick up the long-awaited meeting of November 7 in which City Council considered the Bethlehem Parking Authority's proposal to increase parking violation fines in tandem with the Mayor's previous approval to raise the parking meter rates. This meeting came after the BPA answered a series of questions asked by Council. Council voted 6-1 to table the fine proposal indefinitely. The meter rate rise will still go into effect January 1.

Gadfly felt good about this meeting. He left the meeting with a feeling of satisfaction. He felt progress.

But Gadfly welcomes judgments of the many wise heads in attendance. Remember that Gadfly had said that for him Polk St. haunted this whole process. So many ambiguous statements.

Remember that Gadfly asked the BPA Board directly, "is the Polk St. Garage going to be built?" And was told unambiguously by the bulldog bodyguard BPA solicitor, "Nobody interrogates the Board"!

Well — answer to Gadfly's prayers — the Mayor went right to sole focus on Polk.

The Mayor — without being asked to make a statement — immediately created a positive atmosphere through a 5-minute prepared statement focused on the previously enigmatic Polk St. Garage in which he provided important background in addition to setting a timeline for key future developments. All exactly what Gadfly had been missing.

There was no kumbaya, but the interaction between Mayor and Council was calm and business-cordial. The Mayor and the strong majority of Council (and even the BPA) were agreed on the "table indefinitely" option. There was never doubt of passage. The one negative voice was strong and given plenty of time to articulate his position. All good.

For Gadfly, this meeting took a big step toward clearing the air of the cobwebs around this whole process that have enveloped him for the last 30 or more posts in this long thread.

[Mayor on BPA 11-07-18.](#)

From Gadfly, kudos to the Mayor for his clear, concise statement of where the Polk issue has come from and where it is going. His statement is linked above, transcribed from an audio recording. Gadfly hoped to have a copy of the Mayor's actual statement to post, but it did not come in before press time. Take a look for yourself. Gadfly always suggests going to the primary source and forming your own opinion.

Also, especially, for a feeling of being there, check out [the video of the Mayor presenting his statement.](#)

Here are a few key bullet points from the Mayor:

- The first concrete step on Polk St. happened in 2014 through the Redevelopment Authority.
- The RDA project stalled, and BPA was given responsibility for the project in 2015.
- In early 2017 the Mayor asked BPA to conduct a comprehensive parking analysis as a prelude to capital projects.
- Attempts to secure land from the Sands were unsuccessful till plans for selling the Casino in early 2018.
- BPA approved an agreement of sale in September 2018.
- The goal for beginning construction was the mid-2019.
- Construction should take 16 months.
- The meter and fine increases are needed for Polk St.
- The BPA is exploring financing both with and without City guarantee.
- The Mayor has asked the RDA to compile a complete timeline of their involvement.

The Mayor was organized, provided chronology, provided facts – provided understanding.

Had Gadfly purring like a kitten.

Councilman Reynolds then completed construction of Gadfly's Era of Good Feeling by asking direct follow-up questions and getting direct answers ([see the video of Reynolds here](#)):

- Yes, there is an agreement of sale for 3rd and Polk.
- Construction should start mid to 3⁴'s 2019.
- Construction should take 16-18 months.
- Yes, the increased revenue is needed for Polk.
- BPA will discuss options for funding with Council early in 2019.
- Possibly, BPA funding may not need City guarantee.
- But even if not, BPA will discuss funding with Council.
- The fine proposal will be taken up again when funding is discussed.
- That meeting will take place in the first 1⁴ 2019.

Clarity. Transparency. Timeline.

Pretty damn close to the strategic plan the Council letter asked for.

Now, here's the only hitch Gadfly could see. Councilman Colon asked the Mayor if meter rates were still going up January 1, thus causing, if so, a skewed proportion with the fine structure that will remain static till later into 2019.

The Mayor said yes.

Meter rates going up though fines remain static.

Gadfly doesn't understand that. And we'll return to this point later.

We live in a Fallen World (remember, Gadfly moonlights as a philosopher-theologian weekends), is all he can say.

Can't have everything.

Video by Owen Gallagher