

# **Councilman Callahan charges “unethical behavior” / Mayor Donchez charges “unwarranted personal attack”**

The Bethlehem Gadfly | City government, Ethics, Serious Issues | November 21, 2019

 Latest in a series of posts on City Government 

## *November 19 City Council meeting video*

*Bethlehem Mayor Robert Donchez on Tuesday said he would consider changing the 57-year tradition of cabinet members attending City Council meetings if there's another “unwarranted personal attack” on a member of his administration like the one Councilman Bryan Callahan made at a recent council meeting. Reading from a four-page speech before City Council, Donchez did not mention Callahan by name or the details of the comments he found objectionable. The mayor made a reference to the [Nov. 6 meeting](#) when Callahan called the actions of a top mayor's aide “unethical” and [last Thursday's budget hearing](#) where Callahan had sometimes testy exchanges with council members during discussion on the city's golf course.*

*[Nicole Radzievich, Morning Call, November 20, 2019](#)*

*Gadfly always, always, always says go to the primary sources.*

*So he attempts to provide you here with a chronological list of the key moments you need to understand the Mayor's (in Gadfly's time) rather unprecedented statement — an indictment of Councilman Callahan's recent behavior.*

*In addition to engaging in disruptive argumentative skirmishes with other members of Council in recent weeks (see Gadfly's links above), Councilman Callahan believes a member of the Donchez administration should be investigated for unethical behavior, making what is in effect a charge of professional homicide against an unnamed but easily*

*identified department head in public — but without any details. All innuendo.*

*Serious stuff.*

*Follow the bouncing ball through the links below to moments of the November 19 City Council meeting. It will take you a little time, but well worth it.*

### **1) Eddie Rodriguez (1 min.):**

*Yours truly has heard Eddie's name mentioned as a diligent Gadfly-of-the-past. He has started to attend Council meetings again, thus catching the recent bad behavior, and — coincidentally — forcefully calling for its end during public comment at the top of the meeting, that is, before we knew what was coming.*

<https://youtu.be/GbsBqhx5a>

- *“I'd like to ask that the Board members here not debate amongst each other, not to be critical.”*
- *“You are supposed to be the prime example for all of us.”*
- *“I would like the chairman . . . you are the Sergeant of Arms . . . when you say that's it, that's it.”*

### **2) Mayor Donchez (3 mins.):**

*The Mayor rarely speaks at Council. But here he is with fairly lengthy prepared statement, which Gadfly hopes to have a printed copy of to post soon. The Mayor cites insult to his administration, the Council's loss of reputation, and the damage to the working relationship between the two. He dangles the possibility of a decidedly unwelcome next step if the behavior continues.*

<https://youtu.be/dApUzaFvxzU>

- *“I participated in debates over many controversial issues . . . Debate was intense, with strong opinions, but personal attacks were not part of the process.”*
- *“I am more aware than anyone of the importance of the relationship between the administration and City Council.”*
- *“Bethlehem City Council has always been known for its decorum, professionalism, and respect for different points of view.”*
- *“We’ve been the model for many communities on how to conduct government business.”*
- *“Over the past several months there has been a major regression from that standard.”*
- *“I’m not talking about votes. I’m talking about provocative comments and personal attacks which seem to originate from a member of City Council.”*
- *“The departures are having a disproportionate negative impact on working relationships and Council’s reputation.”*
- *“Council members have been unfairly challenged to choose between engaging at the risk of escalation or to answer with silence.”*
- *“The personal attack [at a member of my administration] was unprovoked, out of order, without cause, completely out of line.”*
- *“The members of my administration are professionals . . . I will not subject members of my administration of any more personal attacks.”*
- *“Decorum suffered again when a Council member did not get the answer he wanted.”*
- *“There are benefits [to the tradition of having the Mayor attend City Council meetings].”*
- *“In the future, if there is another unwarranted personal attack . . . I will consider changing that tradition.”*

- *“There have been some recent departures from decorum and professionalism that I feel obligated . . . to address.”*

### **3) Councilman Callahan (5 mins.):**

*At last Thursday’s budget hearing, Councilman Callahan demonstrated the lack of decorum the Mayor spoke of, but here at the Council meeting he makes his golf course proposal in a calm, straightforward way, not one to distress decorum.*

<https://youtu.be/nTg712Xi-pA>

- *“All I’m asking for is a children’s rate [at the golf driving range] like we do on every other recreational fee.”*
- *“The City of Bethlehem should be encouraging kids to stay outside and be active and stay off the streets.”*
- *proposes change from adult rate of \$10/bucket to \$5*
- *“This is a vote for kids.”*
- *“I’m for kids first.”*
- *“I’m fighting for kids to be active and off the streets.”*

### **4) Response to and discussion of the Mayor’s statement (6 mins.):**

<https://youtu.be/mu83c6LKxpE>

*Councilman Callahan states that it is his duty and right to point out administrative wrongdoing to the Mayor, that there was mutual blame to the decorum lapse at the November 6 meeting, and that he and the residents of the City like and want debate out in the open. (Note Councilwoman Negron leaving as Councilman Callahan speaks.)*

*The Mayor states the desire for and value of debate, but it's the "tone" that is the problem.*

*President Waldron notes the positive difference in Councilman Callahan's "approach" (tone) tonight over his behavior at the budget hearing.*

*Councilman Callahan wonders why he's being judged on tone; it's just the way he speaks; and he says look at the video: others made comments before he did.*

**Councilman Reynolds (2 mins.):**

*Councilman Reynolds thanks the Mayor for his "strong statement" about how business should be handled and indicates that he and Council don't have information on the unethical behavior Councilman Callahan has raised and he looks forward to conversation about it.*

*Audio Player*

**AUDIO NOT AVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE**

**Councilman Callahan's concluding remarks (2 mins.):**

*Councilman Callahan makes clear that he is not charging the Mayor or his entire administration with wrongdoing but a department head and not just for one thing "but a couple things." He offers to disclose his information — "of such a serious nature that everybody on Council needs to know about it" — right then and there — but the Mayor says that from his perspective it is a personnel matter (and thus confidential). Councilman Callahan speaks of a "private letter that is "very disappointing" — a letter the nature of which he does not describe, though one guesses it is from the City about their investigation of the matter.*

*Audio Player*

**AUDIO NOT AVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE**

*We may be heading for a car wreck here. Maybe time for Gadfly to pull together various observations of Councilman Callahan over the past year or two.*

*to be continued . . .*