

# **“a completely different model for funding parking” (8)**

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues September 21, 2018

*(8th in a series of posts on parking)*

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Gadfly remarks tonight were spot on in confronting the Parking Authority about documenting public comments from the April meeting as well as tonight's meeting. The fact that the Desman report was never finalized from its draft state with revisions based upon public input is equally as disturbing since the draft report contained numerous errors that were pointed out at that meeting & in other communications.

This report & its recommendations are extremely biased & based on outdated thinking from a company that demonstrated their incompetence in the New Street garage study. Their model is that of generating data to justify new garage construction & parking meter rate increases. To justify the huge New Street garage, they had to reduce the parking study radius from 500 feet to 300 feet to get the answer they were charged to produce.

In the case of the Walnut Street garage in this study, they had to grossly exaggerate the repair cost to get to the tear-down recommendation they were charged to produce.

In the case of last night's meter increase, they simply used outdated philosophy combined with a distorted “peer group” list of comparable cities to Bethlehem to justify their recommendation.

My comments last night were focused on a completely different model for funding parking versus what Desman preaches. Progressive cities understand that their downtown businesses compete with lifestyle centers like Promenade. They have free meter parking combined with heavy fines for exceeding the time limits posted to encourage turnover. Downtown Bethlehem's biggest parking problem is people (including business owners & employees) tying up meters at the expense of the shopper looking for space. My proposal was to eliminate meter fees completely on city streets coupled with the same \$25 fine that Easton employs for overextending the posted times.

By the BPA's own financial report this alternative will generate the same revenue for the Parking Authority than the 50% increase they are proposing in meter rates & fines at 1.50/hr & \$15 fines.

This solution eliminates meter change dumpers from the payroll to put more enforcers walking the streets of downtown.

Our peer group for parking needs to be changed from Reading & Newark to Sarasota & Naples, Florida, & Corning & Saratoga Springs NY. Hopefully the Mayor listened to a different model proposal last night & a potential game changer for public perception of downtown Bethlehem if he were to adopt this outside-the-box thinking for our city & discard Desman as our parking consultant going forward.

Bruce