

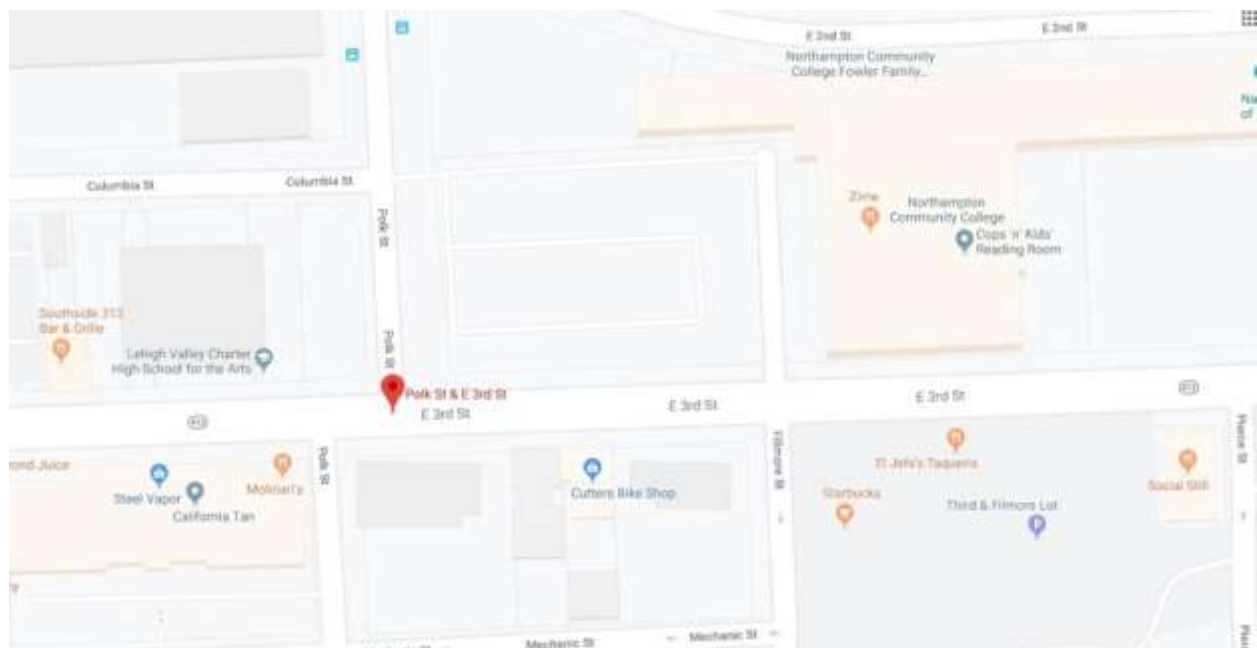
BPA indicates its direction in regard to the Polk St. Garage (79)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues July 5, 2019

(79th in a series of posts on parking)

The Bethlehem Parking Authority made a presentation to City Council July 2 about the proposed new Polk Street Garage (3rd and Polk).

The site for the garage lies on the north side of 3rd St. between Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts on the west and Northampton Community College on the east, and catercorner to Molinari's. See the empty "hole" in the middle of the google image here.



Take a look at the scoreboard above again. This is the 79th post regarding the BPA in the 9 months since Gadfly was born.

Wow!

The air waves have been silent for several months. The Polk St. Garage issue lay dormant while the BPA did some planning.

Let's remember that parking is one of the key elements of the quality of life in a city and especially of downtowns.

Let's remember that Authorities (e.g., Redevelopment Authority, Water Authority, etc.), are independent bodies. But they need City Council approval for taxpayer-backed bonds if they need them, and the Parking Authority, though controlling meter rates (the meters went up to \$1.50/hr. in January), needs Council to approve the penalty rates.

Let's remember that Council balked at raising the penalty rates January 1 when BPA raised the meter rates till it had more information about BPA's plans for Polk St. and how it was going to be financed. City Council wanted a business plan from the BPA.

And let's remember that "our" money is on the line here. "We" pay the meters (and the fines!). "We" are on the hook for loans if BPA can't pay. And the BPA just did a big garage project with the aid of a bond — the New St. Garage at 3rd and New. "We" are on the hook there. And still up in the air is a decision about whether to repair or re-do the Walnut St. Garage. Mega-bucks there either way that "we" could be on the hook for.

The big questions are 1) is another garage needed? (Has BPA made the case?), and 2) how does BPA plan to pay for it?

The Mayor is a firm affirmer of point #1.

And here's what the Mayor said about point #2 in November:

"Bethlehem Parking Authority is exploring all areas of financing future

capital projects, including borrowing with or without City guarantee. Once they have completed their analysis and I have reviewed the options, I will ask the Bethlehem Parking Authority to seek the fine increase and to brief City Council on the recommended method of financing at that time. It is important that the Authority research all the possible options including eliminating risk to the taxpayers of the City of Bethlehem. I expect this to occur early 2019.”

And that brings us to July 2. BPA made an informational presentation. They will be back in August with a definite plan.

Over the next several posts, let's come up to speed in preparation for the definite proposal from BPA that will come in the next several weeks.