

## Council Candidates – 2-year seat – Prompt 3 (23)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues April 13, 2019

*(23rd in a series of posts on candidates for election)*

*BCDC is hosting a candidates' forum May 6, 6PM, at Steelworkers Hall,  
53 E. Lehigh St.*

Election Day is May 21.

Order in which contributions were received this time.

Vote for one.

All of the candidates deserve our thanks!

**Please expand on one of the points that you  
listed in response to question #2.**



**Ashley Daubert**

In prompt two, I explained (briefly) that one of my initiatives as a BCC candidate was “community wellness.” Specifically, destigmatizing mental illness and eliminating the division that exists between mental and physical health – and, instead, integrating them into the umbrella term “wellness.” As an ANCC psychiatric-mental health RN, I have seen people at their lowest. Mental health does not have a face, or a socioeconomic class, or an age, or a gender, etc. It does not discriminate. The purpose of this initiative is to examine the “wellness” of our community – to address the opioid epidemic; to examine the affordability of housing related to respective income potential, rates of homelessness, crime rates and public safety; to talk about why the suicide rate in the Lehigh Valley is at an all-time high; to be aware of the issues our children and our aging population are facing; and to come together as a community to address these issues. My plan is to increase education and awareness – to get out in the community and talk to community leaders and school officials, those who are currently suffering from/with one or more of the aforementioned challenges, local law enforcement, and organizations that work to combat these issues. We need to talk about these things – and not just hear one another, but actively listen, and work together to come up with viable solutions to address human suffering within our City. I see it every day. Creating partnerships and increasing education and awareness are the first steps in the development of a plan of action. A plan that has the ability to change the *quality-of-life* for those that need it most. In terms of value, you can’t “quantify” waking up every

morning with purpose and being thankful to be alive. Imagine being able to change the course of someone's life – to know that your efforts have made your community a better place to live, work, and raise a family, for all.

I have the power to do that.

You have the power to do that.

We have the power to do that.



### **Will Carpenter**

Why have a plan?

I have witnessed many cities progress through a reactionary process. If someone wants to put something new here, then let's be grateful and find a way to make it work. The results are not always bad. Most development comes about because a need is identified and filling that need can benefit the investor and the community. The problem with this type of reactionary planning approach is that each new piece takes away a little from what exists rather than building together on a unified vision.

As a member of the Bethlehem City Council, I will become fully knowledgeable of our current comprehensive plan to understand the stake holders and its history. I will work to understand what the vision of growth was, what parts of our natural resources it seeks to enhance, what deficiencies in our commercial, housing, or transportation policies it seeks to address. What coming trends and future needs it looks to adapt to and prepare for. This will be the context through which I would consider zoning issues, traffic flow, use of public funds, and other issues.

Cities with good leadership and a solid vision become the most attractive place to live and invest in. Taking a thorough look at what we have, what we want, and what we need to protect will help to refine a vision and a plan. For residents, investors, and developers this plan gives a structure, a level of certainty, and that tends to attract more investment and development, which bring good jobs and a vibrant economy. No plan can ever anticipate all the future needs or possibilities. Changes must be made thoughtfully, with public input and open discussion, and we must trust our planning staff to protect the long-term thinking and not allow short-term political needs to take us off course.



### **Grace Crampsie Smith**

While all of my priorities are vital, I would like to expand on priority #1, assuring the health, safety, and well being of all. As a school counselor, within the past 2 years, I have seen an astoundingly significant increase in the number of students and families facing homelessness. This is a direct result of the lack of affordable housing throughout our country and within our communities such as Bethlehem. The disparity between housing costs and income has grown considerably and has received national and local media attention.

Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. An estimated 12 million renters and homeowner households now pay more than 50 percent of their annual incomes for housing. A family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the United States.

While development of residential properties is essential, let's examine the disproportion between the development of high-end luxury apartments and condos versus affordable residential units. We are all interdependent upon one another and thus must assure that our neighbors have the basic needs of life met, first and foremost, affordable and suitable housing.

As I have noted previously, Council members must be mindful that our community is made up of people from all walks of life who have varied incomes, educations, and skills, and we all want the same thing – to provide for our families and have a good quality of life.

Recent initiatives such as the partnership between the Community Action Development Corp. of Bethlehem and the City of Bethlehem to rehab homes on the South Side is promising and needs to be expanded upon.

To further address this issue, I would propose developing a task force of public and private entities. I have been fortunate to witness the success of my dear friend and mentor Mary Scullion, Founder of Project Home in Philadelphia. Mary has developed a successful plan to address

homelessness that has received international recognition. She accomplished a significant decrease in homelessness via the collaborative efforts of public officials and private entrepreneurs. After all, assuring our community members have affordable and suitable housing promotes stronger, safer neighborhoods, which benefits the community at large.



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