

A proposal, an invitation: “Perspectives on the Budget”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Serious Issues November 9, 2019

 3rd in a series of posts on the 2020 Budget 

“A man must know his limitations”

Henry James

19th century American writer

2020 Proposed Budget

Mayor Donchez’s 2020 Budget Address

City Council calendar of budget meetings with agendas

It’s impossible to overestimate the importance of the City budget.

Budgets are a stark statement of a city’s values and direction.

We Gadflyers should have some conversation about the budget.

The City budget is 300 pages long and best digested in small bites.

Gadfly, who knows 9 uses of the comma, is no budget sherpa.

Gadfly knows his limitations.

But Gadfly — like many of you — would like to know what he should see in the budget, what he should be thinking about, how he should feel about it.

So here are two proposals for a series of posts under the broad title of “Perspectives on the Budget”:

1) Gadfly would love to have 3-5 people commit to give us their perspectives on the budget as a whole — people with different views, different angles, different backgrounds, different philosophies. What does it look like from where you sit? Such a post might even but not necessarily comment on the nature and history of budgeting in Bethlehem. Gadfly is thinking of something fairly substantial. Maybe 500-word range. But the prof would take less. Could Gadfly have some volunteers? Or suggestions for people whom he should approach?

2) There are four budget hearings with specific agendas (see the calendar link above): November 12, November 13, November 21, and December 9. The meetings will be televised. Gadfly would love to have any number of people commit to attending or viewing at least one of those meetings on specific sections of the budget and post their perspectives, however short and fragmentary and tentative and subjective. Could we have “correspondents” for each meeting? Gadfly’s ready to take names of volunteers.

Gadfly is sure that in the budget and in the budget hearings there will be things we like, things we don’t, things we understand, things we don’t, things that excite us, things that bore us.

But Gadfly’s main purpose is information, participation, education.

Let’s try to get inside this budget process a bit.

Let’s see the City and Council operating at their highest level of responsibility.

And in doing so perhaps we’ll see the Gadfly operating at its highest level of utility.

Gadfly awaits.