

What's up at Walnut St.?

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Parking](#) March 5, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on parking* 

Plans for a new Polk Street Garage are on hold too. Sigh.

selections from Christina Tatu, “Bethlehem looks to take out loan for up to \$800,000 in emergency repairs for garage it plans to replace.” Morning Call, March 4, 2021.

Despite plans to replace it, the Bethlehem Parking Authority is considering taking out a loan for up to \$800,000 in emergency repairs to the Walnut Street Parking garage.

The authority is waiting on the results of a study that will show what it would cost to replace the 46-year-old garage that takes up a city block, what type of parking facility is best suited for the site and what to do about the more than 700 vehicles that would be displaced during construction.

But the results of the study by Desman Design Management are still several months away. Even if the garage is replaced, it would take time to go through the design stage and final approvals, Parking Authority Executive Director Steve Fernstrom said.

“It’s either do the emergency repairs or shut down the garage, and we really don’t have a plan. At this stage we still don’t have a plan for what we are going to do moving forward with the garage, so I think everyone thought it was necessary to get these repairs done,” Jim Broughal, the authority’s solicitor, said in a Feb. 24 meeting of the authority.

Authority member Mark Jobs questioned whether it would make sense to wait for Desman’s feasibility study on a replacement.

But Broughal said the authority must act on the repairs now that it is aware of the need.

“We have a condition report for the Walnut Street garage. It’s not good,” Broughal said. “We have knowledge there are issues with the garage so we have to move ahead and get those issues taken care of or we have to close the garage now.”

If the garage were to shut down now, the authority would lose \$800,000 per year, Broughal said.

“To not do the repairs, I think you’re taking a tremendous risk,” he said. “Now you have the knowledge and you have to do whatever you can to protect the public and that’s why those repairs have to be done.”