The Bethlehem Gadfly Anniversary! All of One Week!

Ed Gallagher, The Bethlehem Gadfly   Gadfly's posts   September 23, 2018

It was exactly one week ago at this time – but after an Eagles loss! – that the Gadfly pulled the trigger on this blog. Except that this week Gadfly had to wait to see the Tiger Woods comeback. (A one-television house. Mrs. Gadfly not happy – "I was watching John Wayne in 'The Comancheros,' " she complained. Sigh. Can this marriage last?)

It will take a while to establish a rhythm and a trust between us, but the Gadfly thinks we are off to a reasonable start.

In short – to borrow a follower witticism – the Gadfly is a Gladfly.

The Gadfly aims – to borrow from another follower – for "healthy public dialogue."

So far we have started conversation threads on the proposed parking meter rate increase and on the proposed Banana Factory expansion.

The Gadfly hopes the parking thread even thus far, for instance, demonstrates the quality (serious), the tone (moderate), and approach (balanced) that will characterize our conversation.

Democracies are noisy. They are meant to be. In the classic American story (Gadfly taught American literature, you know), Rip Van Winkle returns from his twenty-year sleep through the generation of the American Revolution to what Washington Irving calls a "Babylonish jargon" in the new democratic republic. So many voices. So many opinions. But we can listen. And we can be courteous.

*In addition, in the parking thread the Gadfly is experimenting with including video recording so that followers have direct access to the primary sources on which to make their own

judgments. (A dry run for what the City may do in the future?)*

"Reviews" have been good. The Gadfly prizes especially, "Some intelligent discussion. Rare online these days." "Intelligent discussion" – yes, that's what the Gadfly wants.

Well known local blogger and provocateur Bernie O'Hare gave us a nice notice: The Bethlehem Gadfly "has certainly hit the ground running. . . . I am happy to see this new blog."

It takes a while to build an audience. A large and diverse audience is essential for healthy public dialogue. For every issue to get a fair shake, we need all sides represented.

We have made a good start but have a long way to go.

The Gadfly is especially grateful that the mayor and most of Council are following (not the solicitors yet, as far as Gadfly knows). The Gadfly thinks that is amazing. Courageous. Gutsy. Tricky. Risky politically. Voluntarily willing to be "in the arena" where things could get dusty for them. (Yiii, I'm channeling Theodore Roosevelt.) They really don't have to be here. Give them a high-five. The Gadfly appreciates it, respects it, loves it.

The Gadfly bets that in this willingness to participate by elected officials we are damn well unique among cities in the country.

I like unique for Bethlehem.

But we need more followers.

Let me challenge you, each and every one. I estimate that we have 100 followers. I'd like each of you to look at your contact lists and pass the word to 10 others. Probably an easy thing to do with the technology now available to us. If only 3 follow (and please ask them to be sure to "follow" not just to look), we still will have made a significant increase in encouraging public participation in important City issues.

The Gadfly especially would like the elected officials to bring our site to the attention of the – ha! – "power brokers" you deal with: Downtown Bethlehem, Chamber of Commerce, Historic Bethlehem, Democratic Committee, BASD, ArtsQuest, the local colleges, Northampton County Council, Boscola, Samuelson . . . etc., etc., whomever and whomever you deal with on a regular basis in the course of your regular work. We want the right people listening when the people speak. Ask them to "follow." Demand that they "follow." Encourage them to contribute.

And – everybody — this is not "my" blog but "ours." I hope for your contributions. I depend on your contributions. I anticipate with pleasure your contributions. I hope to be more moderator, gatherer, organizer, channel.