

BPA is MIA (77)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues February 27, 2019

(77th in a series of posts on parking)

Gadfly was hoping to give an update on things related to the Parking Authority today, but they canceled their February meeting.

As they did their January meeting.

What's up with that?

They postponed their December meeting twice, and Gadfly was not able to make the third time, so the BPA has been a news desert for Gadfly for some time.

A proposed Polk St. Garage is a pretty hot issue.

Gadfly thought for sure there would be a meeting today because he remembers the Mayor expecting the BPA to report to City Council on funding for the Polk Garage within the first quarter of this year (which means March). And the plan was to have the discussion of the parking fine increase at the same time. (Gadfly followers don't get fines, so you might not have noticed that the meter rate and violation fines are out of balance. The rates went up January 1, but the fines didn't.) He assumed that there would have to be discussions of these matters if they were going to meet a March deadline.

Here's the pertinent section from the Mayor's presentation at the Nov 7 Council meeting: "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."

Also, Gadfly was interested to hear about BPA progress on several things the Mayor asked the BPA to do when he approved the parking rate

increase, like investigating neat-sounding ideas like variable rate parking. See the mayor's letter to BPA: [Mayor Parking Meter Rate Increase](#).

O, well.

But let me tell you about a few other interesting things relating to the BPA while you're here.

Followers know that this is the 77th post in the series because of wild times parking-wise in the final quarter of 2018. And that the BPA and I were not on very good terms.

I found the BPA culture off-putting.

I don't really understand "Authorities" anyway. How they fit. How they run.

So I asked (Right to Know request) for the executive director's contract. I wanted to see who hired him, who paid him, whom he reported to, whom he answered to. I don't get this independent status. What was the chain of command? And I assumed I could tell that from the contract.

I didn't expect to get the contract, assuming it would be personal, but I did think I might get a redacted copy. Much to my surprise, though, I was told "No employment contracts exist" for the executive director. Now that's odd, isn't it? Did the current exec move here from Massachusetts five years ago on a handshake?

Same rationale, I asked for performance reviews. Who's evaluating if the exec does a good job or not? The answer, "To the extent that any such documents exist, this information has been withheld as performance evaluations are exempt." Makes it sound as if there may be no performance reviews either.

I've also often wondered if there is any "training" for some of the volunteer boards. Like Planning and Zoning are really pretty technical at times. So I asked if there were handbooks or orientation materials for new BPA Board members – Human Resources kind of stuff – that might

guide people as to what their job and responsibilities are. The answer was no, nothing of the sort.

I'd already been balked from getting direct emails of the BPA Board members, thwarting any direct contact, which was my purpose. I can't seem to get to first base with this outfit!