

Good Council interplay in the parking fine deliberation

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues October 17, 2019

 133rd in a series of posts on parking 

Always remember that part of Gadfly's mission is to help us know our Council members better so that we are better informed when we vote. (Some members will run again; one or two might run for mayor.)

The discussion over the proposal to increase the parking fines at the October 15 Council meeting went well — though it might not have had the outcome you wanted — and provided a good portrait of three Council members.

Council rejected the Public Safety Committee’s rejection — led by Councilwoman Van Wirt — of the Parking Authority proposal to raise the rates, putting that BPA proposal back on the agenda for consideration at the next Council meeting. (See [“Parking”](#) on the sidebar for the history of this issue.)

Council vote was 5-2 for the motion to reject the committee report — Van Wirt and Negrón as the “nay” votes.

Some of you might remember the dialectical method from somewhere in your schooling: thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

Thesis: Councilman Callahan argued for moving forward (he is not on the Public Safety Committee and thus was a new voice in the discussion) on the BPA proposal.

Antithesis: Councilwoman Van Wirt restated her case for holding up the proposal till the BPA conducted a pilot study that included free parking but a much harsher fine structure.

Synthesis: Council senior citizen Reynolds made the case for doing both, approving the fines now but engaging as well in discussions about a pilot study.

Textbook.

There has been contention between the right and left sides of the Head Table. Not tonight. Good conversation. BC made a good case. Even PVW seemed calmly resigned to losing the vote though inviting her colleagues to join in exploring her idea further with the BPA.

And even Gadfly — who finds new ideas and pilot programs aphrodisiac — thought Council action as the best outcome and looks forward to hearing some good discussion on PVW's ideas at BPA board meetings. He hopes she is not alone in attending.

Listen to some reasonable discourse at Council, your tax dollars at work.

Councilman Callahan

<https://youtu.be/tFcmHBaKIfE>

- “We’ve been discussing this . . . for almost a year now.”
- “I think at some point we need to let the Parking Authority know where we stand.”
- “You can hardly ever find a parking space on Main St.”
- “We don’t want people parking at a meter all day long.”
- “The goal is to make it cheaper for people to park in the garages.”
- “We are actually rewarding people breaking the law.”
- “You are saving two dollars by breaking the law.”
- “The downtown’s not struggling.”

- “We have one of the most vibrant and booming downtowns in the state of Pennsylvania.”
- “We need to let the Parking Authority know so that they can move ahead with Plan B.”
- “Right now it’s out of control down there.”
- “It’s cheaper to just take a fine.”
- “It’s time to move it forward.”

Councilwoman Van Wirt:

https://youtu.be/bdtmH-d-y_o

- “I wanted to make sure that when the Parking Authority was taking into consideration making structural changes . . . that the Parking Authority was considering what’s best for the people of Bethlehem, the parkers of Bethlehem, the small businesses of Bethlehem, and not just the bottom line of the Parking Authority.”
- “I requested that the Parking Authority consider instituting free parking in a pilot area . . . “
- “Any proposal that the Parking Authority would put forward that would entail free parking and helping our downtowns be more lively . . . something that shows that we can use the power of parking to help our downtowns and not just continue to add fees.”
- “Hoping to accomplish is having that dialog now rather than hoping the Parking Authority will do this at some future junction.”
- “I would still like to go before the Parking Authority, and I hope that my colleagues on Council . . . would come with me.”

Councilman Reynolds:

https://youtu.be/8oIUO_omaEc

- “The one thing we all agree on is that the parking system is complicated.”
- “And I also thinks that everybody hates the Parking Authority so much, it’s hard to have a rational conversation about some of these things.”
- “I think going forward there’s not a reason we can’t do both of these things.”
- “I agree . . . City Council should have some ways to influence that conversation.”
- “I think both of these ideas have merit.”
- “We should have a vote on this in three weeks, but I also think that as a City Council, we should take a look at some of the different ideas such as creating a pilot program.”
- “I think both of these ideas are worthwhile.”