

Gadfly in a bit of distress

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police July 7, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Followers know that “community” is a Gadfly aphrodisiac word.

So the idea of a Community Engagement Initiative has his loins a’leapin’!

But Gadfly wishes that, as he had heard, that there was going to be a Public Safety Committee meeting to talk the CEI out a bit before a resolution came before City Council to be voted on tonight.

As Gadfly has already said several times in these pages over the last several days, he was surprised at the form the resolution took.

Here are several major points/questions that Gadfly would like to see discussed more before a vote is taken:

- Isn’t the suggested scope of possible activities for the CEI too broad? Wouldn’t it be better to focus at first on a narrower goal? Such as examination of police policies, where this whole national conversation started.
- There seems to have been a series of CEI-like forums in 2016 run by or with the NAACP — what can this experience tell us about how productive a CEI run by the City Administration would be?
- Was any thought given to hiring an outside body with skills in this area to “engage” the police with the community to shape a plan and goals such as is being done, for instance, with the Climate Action Plan? This is one helluva big project that will take great skill to pull off.
- What is the role of City Council in the CEI? There seems to be none suggested. Gadfly wished there were some. Checks and balances.
- In other words, frankly, can the City alone be trusted with such an enterprise?
- What if the City/Police Department say no, or what if, once established, the CEI doesn’t function properly?

- Was any thought given to suggesting from the get-go that the CEI have more power than assisting and discussing and even generating? Sounds like the CEI can be easily ignored.
- Why didn't Council put together a CEI plan of its own?
- Shouldn't some time frame be included? Some time marks for the City to return with a plan and for convening the CEI? We don't want this to take a year getting off the ground.

Gadfly just feels uneasy, as if we are jumping into something very, very vague — a community group that can deal with just about anything and include just about everybody and has no power.

This is creation of a public space for discussion. What we need to be sure to have is a public space where discussion leads to action.

Gadfly's not sure he sees that here.

Doesn't feel right at all.

Why did we skip over the Public Safety Committee meeting?