

Councilman Callahan fosters ideas for opening restaurants for outside service

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, coronavirus, Uncategorized May 20, 2020

🦋 *Latest in a series of posts on City Government* 🦋

Video: City Council meeting May 19
begin min. 54:05

Audio Player not available in this archive

If Gadfly understood Mr. Evans correctly, the City had ideas of closing streets and using parklets to improve outside accessibility to services by restaurants and other of our small businesses, but these plans have been put on hold for now by state directives.

Councilman Callahan strongly supported this idea, indicating that he had sent a letter to the governor (see below) as well as talking personally with the mayor.

- Some of our most successful businesses on Main St. and Southside are really struggling.
- Some might not make it.
- The Home Depots, etc., are open, and we are allowing curbside for restaurants.
- How about closing the roads one-way — one-way traffic — giving more table space and socially distancing space?
- Can possibly be done in a safe manner: paper goods, non-reusable utensils, etc.
- Only family members that live under the same roof at a table, for instance.
- Others would have to be 6 feet away.
- Owners realize the virus might come back in the fall.
- Just trying to get their sales up a little bit to survive.
- Encourages the City to talk with the business owners and come up with a plan for the right time.



- Home Depots, etc., are handling the bathroom cleaning issue — could be done here in our downtowns as well.



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The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capital
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

My name is Bryan Callahan and I am a Councilman in the great City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I am a Nitschmann Middle School Lion and a Liberty High School Hurricane until the day I die. I truly love my City with every fiber in my heart. I have seen Bethlehem up, down, and also rebound from the loss of Bethlehem Steel. After the steel industry closed its doors, our beautiful city really struggled for a number of years. Main Street was littered with empty boarded up store fronts. But with a lot of hard work from several Mayoral administrations and City Councils, we turned Bethlehem into one of the "Top 100 cities in the United States to Live and Start a Business", according to Money Magazine and our Main Street was named by USA Today as a "Top Ten Main Streets in the United States".

I am not writing this letter to put you or anyone in your administration in a political bind. I am a Clinton, Obama, and Joe Biden supporter through and through. I am also a Tom Wolf supporter, with not only my votes, but also with a donation to your campaign. I truly appreciate the thoughtful manner and analysis that lead to your decision to be proactive by quarantining the state to combat the Coronavirus pandemic.

In the last ten days, I have had dozens of owners from very successful small business and restaurants, who have thrived throughout Bethlehem for almost 15 to 20 years, tell me that they cannot make it much longer. My hope, or ask, is that we all can come up with a viable plan to somehow allow to have these businesses submit to the City, County, or State health bureaus a smart warm weather, social distancing, outdoor floor plan/layout with ideas to provide and assure that everyone is safe from spreading the COVID-19 virus.

Over the last two weeks, I have had to run errands at a CVS pharmacy, Wegmans food store, and a Home Depot. In that time, I have not seen one individual in public not wearing some form of mask or face covering and stores are limiting the number of people in the stores along with special floor markings to ensure 6 feet of social distancing. I firmly believe that it is due to the educational efforts that you and your administration have set in place over the last 9 weeks.

I believe particularly that restaurants that are now providing curbside takeout food can also serve those same items to outdoor dining tables. To ensure a safe environment for the public, the tables can be placed 6 feet apart with only family members permitted together, they must use take out containers for wine/beer/mixed drinks in disposable cups, and that staff are designated to sanitize ALL surfaces that customers could possibly touch (tables, chair backs, toilet handles). The only reason a customer would be coming into the building would be to use the restroom, which people are now using at grocery stores and stores like Target and Home Depot.

All staff would be required to wear masks and gloves. Customers would be required to wear masks if they needed to enter the building.

I believe these simple steps would at least allow these businesses to bring in some revenue to at least survive this pandemic while not creating a spike in COVID-19 cases. I look forward to working with you and your administration to help find a way to provide a safe manner in which all of these businesses can open and operate in a safe COVID-19 environment.

Thank you for everything you and your administration have done in keeping our Commonwealth safe and for taking the time to read my concerns.

Yours truly,


Councilman Bryan Callahan

The Bethlehem Gadfly