

# Another idea relating to the Parking Authority proposal to increase the fine structure

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues August 15, 2019

*(107th in a series of posts on parking)*

Back to the thread on the Bethlehem Parking Authority and the Polk Street Garage.

Remember that the BPA will probably attend City Council next Tuesday August 20 to present their final financial statement on the Polk Street Garage and to propose a schema for increasing the parking fine schedule.

If — as certainly supposed — the BPA still proposes to fund a \$16.8m Polk Street Garage by a private loan rather than a city-backed (us) bond, then City Council has no say and the financial statement will be presented for information only. There was some static from Councilwoman Van Wirt earlier when the draft financial statement was presented, and [Gadfly has some unanswered questions](#) potentially undermining the fundamental validity of the project, but, as Gadfly understands it, the BPA can basically go its own way here.

Remember, the garage is \$16.8m.

We have to keep saying that.

\$16.8m. \$16.8m. \$16.8m.

And the BPA can go it alone.

It may be alright, but Gadfly would sure like to be surer.

But Council does has power over the parking fines. The Mayor has already approved meter rate increases that went into effect January 1.

By the way, have you noticed that meter increase — from \$1hr., for instance, to \$1.50/hr.?

Just so happens that my barber yesterday was “hot” over the increase and said others were. Though I have heard no comments directly.

The BPA plans to propose again the fine rate schedule that they did late in 2018, in which, for instance, a current \$10 fine would be raised to \$15 — though — and this is the interesting element in the request — they do not immediately need the extra revenue to finance the new garage.

They will be asking for money that at the moment they don’t need.

But, again, here, when it comes to fines, Council does have the controlling power.

Gadfly [examined the situation earlier](#) and concluded that Council most likely will agree to the rate schedule proposed by the BPA. So that we will see fine increases that, 9 months belatedly, will rise symmetrically with the meter rates already in effect.

Dana Grubb, however, [proposed a rollback plan](#). Gadfly was going to do some English-prof mathematics to see what that might look like but hasn’t gotten around to it yet. Bad Gadfly.

But another Gadfly follower mentioned the possibility of approving increased fines if the BPA would institute variable rate parking, an idea

suggested by residents last year, taken up by the Mayor, and for which the BPA has now hired a consultant. As the term suggests, parking meter rates would not be uniform across the city but could vary in different locations and at different times. Apparently the meters we now have can perform variable rate parking. We have the technology but have not used it yet.

Coincidentally, Jeff Speck (2018), the guru Gadfly followers will recognize he has been reading lately in regard to affordable housing, recommends variable rate parking:

When parking is too cheap, parking gets too crowded. . . . For a downtown to function rationally its parking must be priced rationally. This means that price must reflect value, with the most desirable spots getting the highest price. In many places, this price should vary around the clock to reflect changing demand.

This might mean, for one instance — if Gadfly understands correctly — that parking on a Friday night in Northside downtown would cost more than it would on, say, Tuesday morning because of the higher demand.

Gadfly is not sure whether going to VRP has a financial consequence or that its primary purpose would be fairness — for he remembers residents in outer fringe parts of meter territory (West Side?) complaining about why their meter rates had to be the same as downtown.

Gadfly thinks the follower who suggested this was thinking of using implementation of VRP as a bargaining chip with BPA for approval of their fine proposal.

Ahhh, Gadfly wishes he could think politically.