

A note on the Wage Equality ordinance

The Bethlehem Gadfly Wage equality December 7, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on wage equality* 

The wage equity ordinance

The wage equity/wage equality ordinance passed the second reading at City Council December 1 and will take effect in a year, giving employers sufficient time to be aware of its contents.

It's a good ordinance.

The ordinance was introduced a year ago by Councilman Callahan, and until recently deliberations on it were gnarled. Followers might want to click **“wage equality”** on the sidebar and browse back through the history of the legislative process on this ordinance in the Human Relations committee, which Councilman Callahan chairs and on which serve Councilwomen Van Wirt and Negron.

The now approved ordinance has two equal and complementary parts, the first the original proposal by Councilman Callahan and the second an amendment to the original by Councilwoman Van Wirt.

A. Prohibition on Inquiries into Wage History (Callahan)

B. Prohibition on banning the sharing of wage information (Van Wirt)

Now this “note” may seem like a little thing. Gadfly doesn't think it is. But you judge and feel free to let him know if you think he's sideways on this one.

In his presentation of the ordinance as chair of the committee both at first reading (November 17) and the second reading (December 1), Councilman Callahan totally omitted mention of the Van Wirt part, leaving it to her to close the loop. In effect, then, Councilman Callahan presented only “his” part of the ordinance.

Here’s Councilman Callahan December 1:

Here’s Councilwoman Van Wirt December 1:

“Mr. Waldron, I think Mr. Callahan forgot 50% of the ordinance, so I thought I would just include the other significant part of this ordinance. . . I wanted to make clear that there are two parts to this ordinance.”

Indeed.

Perhaps, one could pass this over if it happened once, but the slight (which is the way Gadfly sees it) to Councilwoman Van Wirt happened twice.

And Councilman Callahan had the opportunity both times to make polite acknowledgment of his oversight, if oversight it was, but he didn’t.

And one could pass this over if it weren’t for a general history of verbal skirmishes between them and the specific history of perplexing and sometimes heated discussion on this bill in committee with the female members that you can check for yourself.

Though he and Councilwoman Van Wirt are officially co-sponsors of the ordinance, Councilman Callahan sees it as “his” bill. Gadfly is not sure that he even ever acknowledged the specific relevance and value of Councilwoman Van Wirt’s ideas. It sounded like his accepting her

amendment was simply a tactical move to get “his” stalled ordinance to Council for a final vote.

It is quite ironic here that Councilman Callahan does not publicly share billing with a woman for an ordinance championing women’s rights.

Gadfly has always said that one of his goals is to help people know their elected officials well so they can make the best decision they can when it comes election time.

Though this example of Councilman Callahan’s behavior vis-a-vis his female colleague might seem a little thing, it should not go unnoticed.

As always, your perspectives welcome, especially if contrary to Gadfly’s.

The Bethlehem Gadfly