



Council folk speak up about the temporary closure of Packer Ave. (2)

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 *Latest in a series of posts about Lehigh University and the Southside* 

Councilwoman Van Wirt (votes against the temporary closure)

- My first concern is why is this being done.
- I'm not convinced by the safety argument.
- The first thing that comes to mind is not vacation of a city street.
- The real reason . . . Lehigh wants to consolidate their campus, and that's not inherently a bad thing.
- But it has to be addressed in the correct way so that the citizens who are giving up city-owned land have faith in the process that all the data was transparent.
- I would ask that the Mayor and Lehigh make the contracts with the consultant transparent.
- This study must have a plan in place to disseminate the results.
- I thought more people could have been brought in by a more robust campaign to get the word out about what was going to be talked about.
- What was good about that meeting was that a lot of the stuff brought up was incorporated into the plan.
- There was a lot of people calling out that this was not being done for safety.
- I think that you can engender trust in the community of South Bethlehem if we're pretty frank and candid about why we're doing this.
- We're doing this to make Lehigh stronger . . . that's why we are doing this.
- The primary reason is for the university.
- That is citizen-owned land . . . steep price.

- The traffic concerns are real.
- What are we doing with the dollars we're given for that land? I would like to have some discussions now.
- What does it physically look like?
- Are those crossing guards going to be permanent for the Broughal students?
- How do we draw the citizens up into this space that was formerly theirs?
- How do we make it more like the citizens of Bethlehem feel they are more pulled in to?
- How do we create better bike and pedestrian experiences?
- How do we pull South Bethlehem back up in to the campus so that we can really integrate it?
- What I really would encourage Lehigh to do is postpone this.
- There's too much that needs to be done before the March date.
- Have this study happen in the fall.
- I do have a vision of what this permanent closure could look like for Bethlehem, and it's a great vision.
- I think that it could be a great thing for South Bethlehem if it's done correctly, and that means it has to be a slower process with the community involved.
- I would advocate for a citizens' steering committee.
- Maybe the money we get for the land itself gets put into a community fund dictated by the committee for what it's used for.
- Maybe Lehigh can help start a South Bethlehem Business association . . . Maybe that could help with some of the problems we are having drawing students down the 3rd and 4th streets.
- I have a vision that this can work., I just ask Lehigh to slow down.
- . . . a community process that better addresses the problems brought up here.
- . . . fully pulls the community in to this so that they believe the process instead of feeling that it's being jammed down their throats.

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