

CM Waldron on “the 2” (62)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues December 16, 2018

(62nd in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St.)

CM Waldron Dec 4, 2018 “Yes”

Complete Transcription of CM Waldron’s remarks:

“I agree with a lot of the points made by the speakers, folks who emailed in, and then my own colleagues here obviously have put a lot of thought and time into this vote and where they come down on this side of it. I think Dr. Van Wirt really makes some strong points, and I agree with a lot of what she said, likewise with what Mr. Reynolds just summed up about what are neighborhoods and what is the feeling you want in a neighborhood. So, again, you can come down on either side of this vote depending on whom you’re speaking to and who is in front of you advocating passionately for their neighborhood. So, this is going to be a 4-3 vote tonight, which is a rare thing on this Council because most of the time we vote on stuff more often than not it’s 7-0 because there are really clear answers and clear solutions to problems.

This is one where it’s a little bit trickier for sure. Last night we had our 4th budget hearing meeting in which we were discussing a \$78m budget for our city including a tax increase of 3%, and we ended the meeting with one person from the public who was here to be part of that meeting. This goes to show you where a \$78m budget lines up with how people passionately feel about their neighborhood. I think that shows the level of engagement in a both positive and negative way, depending on how you want to look at it. I think it ultimately comes down to the point of what Dr. Van Wirt said, is this a net positive for the neighborhood and for the city? And I come down clearly on the side that, yes, it is. So I will be supporting the amendment this evening.”

AW doesn’t give us much to work with here. PVW is totally on the other side of the issue from AW, and it is not clear which of her “some strong points” he agrees with only to discount. That would be illuminating. And since JWR summed up only his feelings about his neighborhood, we can only assume AW agrees commercial is good in a residential area. Not much to go on. AW adopts the good-for-the-neighborhood-and-the-city “standard” from PVW but does not share how he applied that standard – which, of course, is the essential

step. All of a sudden a “tricky” vote became “clear.” How? We have an empty space at the climax of the voting. A vacuum. AW broke a tie. Without rationale. Leaving us in doubt whether justice was done. That’s frustrating. The Mayor, by the way, did this too before the voting. Both the Mayor and the President of City Council, then, voted “ex cathedra.” (Gadfly #2 Scheirer used this phrase several meetings back, and I know we all looked it up at that time, so I don’t have to define it here.) Not good. We deserve more. And we look forward to a better explanation from AW at the final vote, though then – sigh – it is too late to exercise any influence on his thinking, if one had a mind to do so. And that’s what public participation is all about.

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So ends our close examination of Council votes and voting statements on the 2 W. Market petition. We have made sure we have stated and understood each Council member’s position, whether yay or nay. And then we have pushed and poked on them. Our purpose has been – whether we agree with their votes or not – to sense how intelligent and thoughtful the Council members are, how fair and objective. Do they exhibit the qualities of mind we value, we desire, we must have in our elected officials? And beyond that, of course, we want to put ourselves in the best possible position to make the best possible personal decision on this issue of relevance to all neighborhoods if we want to influence Council members’ final votes next Tuesday.

Gadfly will share his thoughts and sum up in the next couple posts, but you should be about making up your mind too. He has tried to make sure you have all the information you need. Up to you now.