

A modest proposal: an even merrier more

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Modest proposals, Serious Issues February 12, 2019

(3rd in a series of modest proposals)

It's the new year. And it's an election year. A time to be proposing things. The Gadfly project is all about participation of, interaction with, and communication to the public.

(It's a bit distant but mark your calendars for the March 26 launch of the City Communication Survey led by CM Reynolds. 3:30 Town Hall. Gadfly will remind you.)

In [his previous modest proposal](#) Gadfly asked us to think about City Council meetings in terms of two metaphors.

The City Council meeting is the public *face* of City government and should be the *hub of the wheel* of City governance.

And he suggested that Council invite certain Authorities and Boards and so forth to “visit” the meeting twice a year to talk with/to Council *and* the public.

This next proposal is similar.

Gadfly didn't always understand the finances at the series of budget meetings at the end of last year, but he very much appreciated “meeting” the department heads, who were pretty much unknown to him beforehand, and hearing them talk expertly about what they were doing or planning to do in their areas.

Now that was interesting and enlightening. And humanizing.

Could these department heads be brought in to enliven the Council meetings with discussion of real work affecting residents in process or planned?

The City organization chart shows 7 departments under the Mayor. (There's a link to the chart on the Gadfly sidebar.)

Gadfly would imagine that in conjunction with formulating a budget each department has a set of goals – an annual plan of some sort – for the year that is the subject of periodic review with the Mayor and is the point of reference for the department's performance evaluation.

Similar to the previous modest proposal, Gadfly is suggesting that each department head come to a meeting twice a year, once in the first half and once in the second, and briefly tell “us” what's happening in that department.

Highlights.

Our Council meetings are “live” and on video now. We could announce a schedule of such guest appearances – “coming attractions” – and promote them in a modest way. People with interest in certain areas could be alerted to attend or tune in or catch up later.

Gadfly likes to say that he hungers for information. He wants to know as much as possible about what is going on in his town.

Newsletters and other mechanisms and tools to push out information to the public that will come out of the Communication Survey are good things. But Gadfly modestly proposes modest personal interaction that would spice up the necessary and important business and busy-ness of necessary Council routine.

And give the public a reason to be involved.

(“Modest Proposals.” Things – even really small things – that we’d like to see happen. Gadfly invites you to contribute your modest proposals. If you favor a modest proposal, let the Mayor and Council know – email links are on the Gadfly sidebar.)