

BPA's Second Proposal: Increasing Fines (28)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues October 4, 2018

(28th in a series of posts on parking)

The BPA Proposal

Now that the Mayor has approved BPA's request for the increase in parking meter rates, BPA is requesting City Council to approve increases in the fine structure. And there's a Public Safety Committee meeting Wednesday Oct 10 6:30 to discuss the BPA parking fines proposal.

The Gadfly admits to wonkish behavior.

I feel a wonk coming on.

Here's what puzzles me: the BPA answers to the Mayor for meter rates.

And to Council for fines.

Really?

Who set that up and why?

Is Gadfly the only one who twists his nose up in an improbable way and says, "Huh?"

One would think the two would be automatically linked one t'other.

Especially since they should move in tandem according to the Desman report and the supporting material in the proposal. Which makes sense.

A structure with such dual separate funding sources and approving bodies on what is, in effect, one unified system would seem potentially subject to absurd outcomes.

Like having different doctors with different treatment plans working separately on each twin joined at birth.

Imagine, for instance, if the fine for a meter violation were less than the meter charge. Or suppose Council voted on the fines first, what would that do to a proposal on rates?

On the surface, makes no sense to me.

Seems like there should simply be some sort of automatic re-sizing of the fines when the rates go up.

So, why do two separate bodies have jurisdiction?

I guess only a wonk would care.

The answer must lie somewhere in the “history” of the establishment of this Authority. Job for a historian.

Unless there is a wise head in the group that saves me from the task.

I’ll bet I’ll be surprised at the logic of it all.

There are probably better ways for the Gadfly to spend his time.

In any event, there’s a Public Safety Committee meeting Wednesday Oct 10 6:30 to discuss the parking fines.

Relevant sections from the BPA proposal prepared by Desman:

“Parking industry standards suggest that the fine for non-payment of a parking meter or other parking meter violations be priced at least 10-15 times the hourly parking rate. The fine for illegally parking in a residential permit parking zone should be priced at least as high as that for a parking meter violation, in order to ensure that non-residents who should be parking at meters do not, instead, park in residential areas. Finally, certain violations that create dangerous traffic situations or take spaces from drivers with disabilities, such as parking too close to a corner or illegally parking in an ADA space, respectively, should carry higher fines, commensurate with the severity of the offense.”

“DESMAN is proposing that the fines associated with parking meter violations (Code 1A, 1B and 1C) be increased from \$10 to \$15. These increases will bring the fine amounts for parking meter violations in Bethlehem closer to those of the peer cities examined. In addition, should the hourly rate at the parking meters in Bethlehem be increased in the future, the proposed fine amounts will allow the City and Parking Authority to maintain the ideal ratio of fines that are 10-15 times the hourly parking rate.”

“Aside from the parking meter violations, nearly every other proposed increase is meant to bring the fine for a violation to \$20. These fine

amounts should help discourage illegal parking behaviors, more so than the current fines of \$10 or \$15 for these violations.”

“Finally, DESMAN is proposing that the fines associated with unauthorized parking in handicapped parking spaces be doubled, from \$50 to \$100. The higher fines for these violations are intended to punish parkers who are fully physically capable from parking in the limited number of spaces that are available for handicapped parkers. Despite the proposed increases, these fine amounts are still well below the average of \$146 charged for similar parking violations in the peer cities we examined.”

So, there you go. The Gadfly is not sure there is much to fuss over. Once the meter rates go up in the way the Mayor decided, the fines seem to have to fall in line.

Is the Gadfly missing something? Is there an issue here?