

The 2nd round of supporting statements on 2 W. (69)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues December 22, 2018

AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE

(69th in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St.)

So the second-round vote was 4-3 in favor of the 2 W. Market petition, just like it was the first time. No change there in the final tally.

But, except for CM Colon, we have another round of supporting statements that give us a window into the voters' minds. Which is precious information. Gadfly has said that one of the goals of his project is to be a more informed voter.

All of the Council members will no doubt run again, and some may even have higher ambition. In fact, CPs Martell, Reynolds, and Van Wirt end their terms in 2020.

When it comes time to vote, Gadfly wants a better basis of judgment than he's had before. Which was basically no basis at all. He wants to know better who is intelligent, thoughtful, visionary, fair, hard-working, articulate, caring for the City, and so forth.

And through me, some of you might have a better basis as well. I'm already being asked who's good, who's not so good. You know, "Gadfly, you go to all those meetings, who are the good Council people."

So, as you listen to the supporting statements below (the dang video bummed out on me at voting time – no video), I'm suggesting that you look for the models of behavior exhibited by our Councilpersons, just like you looked for models of behavior in the residents making comments.

Who meets and exceeds your expectations of our elected officials, and who doesn't?

And this doesn't mean whom you agree with and whom not on this 2 W. issue. The vote doesn't necessarily tell you anything. It might be totally mindless. That's why Gadfly was upset at Council President Waldron for going completely dark in the first round as the swing vote in a tight, hard-fought controversy. Gadfly is perfectly capable of recognizing and respecting an

argument that differs from his own. The supporting statement tells you the quality of mind. And that's worth discovering. Regardless of what side of an issue a person is on.

In order of appearance. Note and don't miss CM Callahan's second commentary. He asked for more time at the end. So you'll see a CM Callahan (2). Don't miss it.

CW Negron

Speaks her mind and speaks on behalf of the people who elected her. Moved by Mary Toulouse's statement to allow residents to decide about their communities, but that is what the Zoning ordinance is already all about – and many residents served on the committee that formed it, were part of that decision-making. All we have to do is follow them and the ordinance. What you want was done already. She lives on the Southside, and it has changed. Admires people who live in the Historical District who have enough money to buy there and maintain the houses and are doing it on their own without needing a text change. Playing off Beall Fowler's comment that Zoning should be permanent – that's what it should be, but not in Bethlehem, it seems. Depends on how deep your pocket is. Doing what I believe I was elected to do in voting no.

CM Callahan (1)

Mixed-use neighborhood. All Council has done due diligence. Upset by accusations of rubber-stamping, ethics violated, play-to-play, never taken a dime from Mr. Rij. Always a commercial aspect there on that property. Financial services on that block already. Mixed-use neighborhood. Nothing shady has happened. Psychoanalysis of his comments from last meeting and even of the Council member who made no comments. We try to do our best. This job is a tough job. Always try to do what's best for the city as a whole.

CW Van Wirt

Asked Darlene Heller for list of potential properties (non-conforming + residential) affected. 64 possible. We have not done an analysis. Mayor put planning dept in a bad position. Council in a bad position of voting on something without full knowledge. Lots of questions for Darlene, "flabbergasted" that she's not here. Advice from professional city planner indicates the language in the amendment can be construed in an opposite manner. She has many questions, not any answers. Did exhaustive homework

then met with Mr. Rij. Mr. Rij, contrary to testimony, did make “threat” in personal conversation of a drug or rehab center. Should we be notifying the 64? What if Quadrant vacates or creates a subsidiary? No study of impact. Vote allowed on an illegal terrace in South Bethlehem. Asks Council to consider city as whole. Historical concept in operation is that any development is good development. Like the building at 3rd and New is better than a vacant lot, as if that’s the only choice we have. Benner and Perron development are the only players. Other developers steer clear. Rules in Bethlehem have become muddy. Inappropriate grants. Illegal terrace. Variances with no safeguards. Reads citizen email about why rules are important. Developers blowing through red lights. Eviscerating rules. Don’t have to accept what the developers hand us. Makes a motion to table till there is the city analysis to determine the impact of the amendment. Applause. Failed 2-5.

CM Reynolds

2 kinds of people living in the HD, with differences of opinion. Thinking more about corner conversation. Must take emotion out of this. Don’t drive decision about Mr. Rij, whether positive or negative. Went back to conversations in 2012, what corners meant to the city. Corners are distinct and different – can look at them differently. Nobody back then argued that this would affect other properties on the street. What do we want on our corners and what is the process? Non-conforming uses make the city. Wonders about negative connotation. Some flexibility necessary. Looks at actual corners, and there is positive there. Planning Commission 4-0 against recommendations back in 2012, because the code was too restrictive. And not flexible enough. Council voted against the PC. Anecdotal evidence indicates a lot of the interesting things about Bethlehem relate to corners. Individual non-conforming uses create character. In front of us is an opportunity for flexibility that has a back-drop as far as the Zoning Hearing Board is concerned, as far as precedent, as far as a large community process talking about corners. Public process allows City, Council, ZHB to say yes or no. Need a system that allows flexibility to move forward while at the same time the ability to say no when need be.

CM Martell

All of us run our campaigns on protecting the neighborhoods. Look at the basics. Unique property on the corner of a busy intersection. It abuts a commercial district. It’s surrounded by non-residential uses. The Schadts testified how difficult it was selling the property. There’s a commercial and residential use tied to the property. Three arguments against passing the

amendment: 1) detriment to the neighborhood, but the business has been operating for a year and there is no mention of detriment even by the opposition, 2) problems down the road, precedent, and 3) effects on other properties, but the language of the amendment is sufficiently strict, and any use would go to the Zoning Hearing Board where conditions would apply. We have several different lists of possibly affected properties, but they strengthen the argument because a large part of them are currently operating as respected businesses. A lot are obviously non-residential uses and are of value in the neighborhoods. It provides flexibility for unique properties and can promote smart and sensible investment. Benefit to the property, the neighborhood, and throughout Bethlehem.

CM Callahan (2)

Something bothering him. Last meeting some criticism about stuff going on in the Southside. Every time there's a controversial topic there are people who come out listing uncertainties. Fortunate to have developers in the city: Pektor, Ronca, Benner, Petrucci, Perruci. We don't rubber-stamp. We look at everything on its own merits. Mr. Rij has used the legal process. We are fortunate to have people who invest. We don't have people jumping to develop in Bethlehem. Easy to attack Benner, etc. Know this – if it's so sure-fire a deal, why did the property sit there for 10 years? Why didn't you all get together, put your money up, and do the project? We spend \$65m in investment in the Southside, and we have a regular speaker here who rips the Southside every meeting. A Councilwoman too. Talked to the "mayor of the Southside" Joe D'Ambrosio and asked when was the euphoric state of the Southside? Better 10 years ago? etc. When did the utopia Southside occur? In his 45yrs, never saw the Southside better. Thriving. Vibrant. Lots of effort by many people/administrations. People against 3rd and New etc, what about 1 E. Broad? Sands bring in \$9.5m. Naysayers. People doing due diligence for the city. Who's paying the damn bills? 300 professional people with disposable incomes brought in and people bitched. CAVE people: citizens against virtually everything. There's always a group coming out of the woodwork. Doing our best. Shame that people are being attacked. Stop it. It's nonsense.

CM Waldron

Direct quote of entire statement: "Maybe I can put a bow on this conversation as we approach Christmas. I think it's easy to sit up here or stand up at the microphone and speak in certainties and say if you don't do this, this thing will happen that's bad, or if you do take this action, I guarantee this other thing

will happen. And I think that is a simplistic way to look at it. And it's easy to say that the other side is wrong. What I am choosing to do is to approach this with the idea of faith. Do I have faith that Quadrant will be a good neighbor, and I think the answer to that is a resounding yes. Do I have faith that only a few properties are affected by this change? Again, I am choosing to look at that as a yes. And do I have faith that the Zoning Hearing Board will stand by to protect our neighbors in the event that somebody comes to them and, again, yes, yes, yes. I have faith in the process that has been laid out here, and I have faith for all those who are involved in that process. It may be a bit naïve, perhaps, and some of you may criticize me for that, but I am choosing to have faith in the better nature of all of us. And, for that reason, I'll be supporting this amendment."