

# Pandemic pause for Polk

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking September 12, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on parking* 

*Selections from Christina Tatu, “Bethlehem’s Polk Street Garage is on hold, even after steelworkers memorial was moved from the site.” Morning Call, September 12, 2020.*

The high-profile corner of Third and Polk streets is seen as the key to unlocking development in a neighborhood dotted with parking lots and former Bethlehem Steel buildings that are now vacant.

The authority received \$2.5 million in state grants and last year authorized taking out a loan for the project, which will be built on land the authority purchased for \$2.1 million from the Sands casino, now Wind Creek Bethlehem.

The project calls for a five-story building in front of the garage to be constructed by Peron Development and J.G. Petrucci Co. that would include 32 luxury apartments on the top floors and a store on the first floor. Fernstrom said that portion of the project is separate from the garage and still in negotiation.

On Friday, John Callahan, director of business development for Peron, said he was unaware the parking garage had been placed on hold. The retail and residential portions of the project can’t move forward until the garage has been built, he said.

Many parking spaces have already been leased, he said. The authority has a lease agreement with Northampton Community College for 300 spaces. Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts committed to 45 spaces; Peron committed to 33 spaces and another 35 were set aside for the retail tenant.

“I don’t see where the demand goes away as a result of COVID,” Callahan said. “My understanding is it takes nine to 10 months to build the garage. We are building for the future and allowing further development. This will have a major impact on businesses, more specifically the community college.”