

Martin Tower demolition discussion at City Council May 7 (38)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Martin Tower, Serious Issues May 8, 2019

AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE

(38th in a series on Martin Tower)

Martin Tower demolition May 19

www.martintowerbethlehem.com

Informational meeting

Thursday, May 9, 6PM

Nitschmann Middle School

It's terrible [The City press release]. (Martin Romeril)

Implosion poses health risks. (Forensic Pathologist Steve Diamond)

There's a bad public relations problem here. (Gadfly)

The City of Bethlehem has become the City of Developers. (Stephen Antalics, Gadfly #1)

It's a travesty. (Al Wurth)

The thing that kind of upsets me is this undertone that all these organizations aren't doing what they are supposed to be doing . . . I think you are going to find out that a large majority, an astronomical amount of people are informed about it and feel completely safe about it and you are going to see a lot of people getting up early in the morning to watch it, and they have no fear of anything that's going on at the site and they have complete confidence in all the professionals as I do.
(Councilman Callahan)

Michael Bloomberg said, "In God we trust, everyone else bring data." So tell them to bring data. (Councilwoman Paige Van Wirth)

I think that after that Thursday meeting, your questions will be answered. . . . What they [the experts] can't answer, put their feet to the fire. (Emergency Management Coordinator Robert Novatnack)

I'm prepared to stay here [the Thursday meeting] till 11 o'clock. (Mayor Donchez)

(Gadfly's video tool failed him, but there's audio here below, and, he reminds you, a full video will be posted on the [City Council web site](#).)

Tuesday May 7 City Council meeting began, per usual, with public comment — dominated by the Martin Tower demolition.

Marty Romeril (6 mins.)

Questions still unanswered include such things as the exclusion zone (people may have to leave homes? First Gadfly heard that), wind speed considerations, other meteorological conditions, anticipated radius of the dust cloud, coatings on your house, pets, playground equipment, the range and size of the dust particles, Little League, Golf course, monitoring, Monocacy Creek, Burnside, asbestos.

Steve Diamond (4 mins.)

Forensic pathologist perspective. Lung disease from many elements besides asbestos. Process can take many years, and the cause may not be realized. Slow evolution of failing health because of inability to breathe. Implosion poses health risks. The City is overlooking a health hazard. Will samples of air, water, and soil be taken pre- and post-demolition? Protections of hospitals, streams, etc.? Possible financial liability exposure of the City. [

Gadfly (4 mins.)

Contacted by “desperadoes” — people worried about health issues trying to get answers and getting only a runaround. There’s a bad public relations problem here. Where’s our health department? Asks for an independent scientific study on the safety of implosions.

Stephen Antalics (4 mins.)

The City of Bethlehem has become the City of Developers. The most qualified people are not listened to. Whose will is being served here? This whole thing is a travesty in a sense.

Al Wurth (5 mins.)

Astounded. Perplexed. Never dreamed we would blow it up. We’re doing this to ourselves. It’s a travesty.

In the body of the meeting, the Mayor asked Robert Novatnack, Bethlehem Emergency Management Coordinator, to make a brief presentation. He is the point man for the City on the demolition.

Robert Novatnack and City Council (28 mins.)

- **Novatnack:** holding meetings with press and stakeholders, lot of work going on that doesn't hit the newspapers, experts will be here Thursday, as will owners and development people, more meetings with stakeholders tomorrow, will give PowerPoint presentation Thursday and then open the floor for questions. Later in the conversation he would say that there will be a pamphlet/booklet containing all information (the Mayor said 500 copies will be printed), that the Department of Health will not be at the Thursday meeting (though the Mayor said if they aren't, he would ask our City department to be there).
- **Councilwoman Van Wirt (min. 3:10):** asked for assurance that questions previously raised were given to the DEP and others to answer even before the meeting, and pressed for distribution of answers beforehand so that they could be digested by the public. The City didn't seem to quite get what PVW was after, and she pushed, calling attention to the arbitrary time frame. The bottom line City response to PVW seemed tentative. There's a valid role here for the Department of Health.
- **Councilman Callahan (min. 9:57):** sounding in Gadfly's mind — and based on past experience — defensive against implication that the City and the developer were not doing all they should, asked for naming of all organizations involved in the planning, getting the answers he wanted except that the State Department of Health will not be there (a crucial absence given the health concern that is our issue!), and — for the

record, as if he were a defense attorney — got the City to say they have complete confidence in the demolition company.

- **Councilman Reynolds (min. 12:45):** made clear that it isn't that anybody doesn't trust the City and Mr. Novatnack but that this is a new thing and there are necessary questions, so it's a matter of how we deliver information to people who don't have experience with it.
- **Councilman Colon (min. 16:19):** extended appreciation to the City for what's done so far and for the Thursday meeting and reminded people that unlike 911 this is a controlled demolition and that all the pre-planning steps to clean the building have made it safe.
- **Councilman Callahan again (min. 18:40):** upset at undertone that City and developers and all the organizations aren't doing what they are supposed to be doing, you will find that a large majority, an astronomical amount of people are informed about it and feel completely safe about it and you are going to see a lot of people getting up early in the morning to watch it and they have no fear of anything that's going on at the site and they have complete confidence in all the professionals as I do.
- **Mayor Donchez (min. 20:30):** gave a shout-out to Senator Boscola and Gov Wolf's office for help getting the meeting organized.
- **Councilwoman Van Wirt again (min. 21:31):** clear that this is not about trust in the City or the City representative but about the process, quoting Michael Bloomberg, "In God we trust, everyone else bring data." So tell them to bring data.
- **Council President Waldron (min. 22:37):** only thing awry is communication coming back to the public, lot of questions right now, Thursday a great opportunity to clear them up, asked about format and agenda. Emphasizing need for ample time for questions.

- **Novatnack again (min. 23:26):** expressing great positivity about activities so far and the meeting on Thursday.
- **Mayor Donchez again (min. 26:26):** explained comprehensive information packets that will be available and his willingness to stay late so questions will be answered.