

Gadfly #2 tackles conflict of interest

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Serious Issues September 9, 2019

Conflict of interest was the crux of our recent Zoning Board Hearing Board controversy. Gadfly gathers this was one of the hot topics a few years ago when an ethics ordinance was debated by City Council. The ZHB controversy made clear the need to go at this issue again.

Bill Scheier, Gadfly #2 (16 years of attending Council meetings), talks here at the September 3 Council meeting of different ways to deal with conflict of interest and his optimism that a successful means can be found.

Bill sees a problem and moves to do something about it.

Not just talk. Solution.

Your non-tax dollar at work again.

Won't you aspire to be in a Gadfly video confidently espousing your views in the near future! <https://youtu.be/jLD5mB-JiCg>

- No one I know of has accused anyone of voting a certain way because of campaign contributions.
- But . . . there is always the appearance of a possible conflict of interest.
- Campaign contributions are often pursuant to knowledge of a candidate's views, that is, the candidate's views influence the contributors.

- Whatever are we going to do to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest?
- A blanket recusal would prevent someone from contributing to a candidate with similar views.
- I came up with a limit of almost exactly \$400 per person per election
- A limit on campaign contributions can be combined with recusal such that any contribution over the limit would trigger recusal
- The purpose of a campaign limit can be defeated by numerous contributions from family members and/or employees.
- I believe it will be possible to craft an ordinance that removes any clouds of conflict of interest and still allows contributors to support a candidate with compatible views, but what will be required is a willingness to sit down and engage in thoughtful discussion and analysis of these and other points that will arise.