

“Good conversation builds community” (71)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts, Parking, Serious Issues November 12, 2018

“Most things can be explained. . . . We could provide this information clearer.”

Councilman Reynolds

Gadfly believes strongly in the above tagline for his project.

The major process take-away for him from following this parking issue for several months is the need for better communication all around.

Some randomly organized thoughts about communication during this process, seen, of course, from Gadfly's necessarily outside and possibly ill-informed perspective – and meant to be helpful:

- The Parking Authority does not know how to “speak” to the public or even to City Council. Gadfly said at a BPA Board meeting that they need a public relations person. They had an enormous and no doubt competent parking study, but the tailoring, the transmitting, the marketing, the communicating of that study to important stakeholders was not tended to.
- At the last City Council meeting, the Council liaison spoke of “numerous discussions” recently with the BPA Board chair, but Gadfly doesn't see that there was a channel for those discussions to the rest of Council. Maybe there was; Gadfly is not aware of how Council members interact outside of meetings.
- If Gadfly is not mistaken, according to the published BPA minutes going back to December 2017, the Council liaison has not attended BPA meetings.
- If Council has liaisons to all the Authorities, do they periodically “report” back officially to Council? Gadfly believes there was recent reference to a Redevelopment Authority meeting where something important happened. And “nobody was there.” The whole general issue of announcing meetings, posting agendas, publishing minutes has to be tightened.
- Gadfly, admittedly on slim observation, wonders about the “involvement” of BPA Board members. The chairman is an “institution” (nearly two decades on the Board), and Council

liaison's "numerous discussions" were solely with him, outside of Board meetings. Are the fresh new voices on the Board engaged? Or is the BPA power vested in one person?

- It was not possible for Gadfly to communicate directly with BPA Board members. And some BPA leaders were not responsive to interaction with Gadfly.
- Gadfly found the Mayor's report and demeanor at the last meeting refreshing and reassuring. Gadfly felt the need for more of that. This will sound strange, but Gadfly found himself reflecting that he doesn't hear from the Mayor much. There is little in the way of "reports" at City Council meetings. He is a kind of a "quiet" Mayor. Ha! Which, all in all, I think may be a good trait. But there are times when we need the firm voice of the leader.
- the "trifecta" system – mayor responsible for meter rates, Council for fines, BPA for parking lots – though theoretically it might be seen as a mechanism for the trifectors to talk with one another, doesn't seem to have worked well.

The "parking issue" is not over, but Gadfly thinks there will be some quiet time for a while. Perhaps one or two more posts on it for now, and we can move on.