

Affordable Housing has momentum

The Bethlehem Gadfly Affordable Housing March 24, 2021

 Latest post in a series on Affordable Housing 

*“We’re going to come up with a solid tool box . . . to incentivize housing that is affordable.”
Councilwoman Crampsie Smith*

ref: **A Plea for Affordable housing (1)**

ref: **Good news from Councilwomen Crampsie Smith and Negrón**

ref: **Crampsie Smith Affordable Housing Task Force advances**

Gadfly remembers things.

He has a mind in which things stick.

He can never forget the 70 seconds at the absolute end of the May 2019 Nitschmann Middle School meeting on Martin Tower in which an elderly guy (Ha! but probably younger than the Gadfly) made **a plea for affordable housing** to thunderous applause.

Finishing his thoughts about that night, about that elderly guy’s frail plea, Gadfly wrote then:

“Let’s keep that muffled elderly voice and the vigorous chorus of audience support in mind as we think about what the City can do to remedy the lack of affordable housing. There is a problem, and “we” know in our guts something has to be done about it.”

Gadfly thought of that plea two years ago while at the Community Development Committee meeting last night with “Affordable Housing” smack dab on the agenda.



Thank you, Jesus!

It was one of the most uplifting meetings Gadfly has attended.

Councilwoman Crampsie Smith has taken the lead on this issue and formed an Affordable Housing Task Force that obviously has the full support of (and already considerable thought and work by) key City administrators as well as her fellow Council members.

Gadfly could feel momentum, could feel determination to make something happen.

The talk wasn't characterized by empty rhetoric, by pious aspiration but by facts, strategies, tactics.

Gadfly sensed that everybody meant business.

He will spend another post or two on this interesting and informational meeting, but first let's listen to Councilwoman Crampsie Smith talk about the work:

Audio Player not available in this archive

- The problem is worse for the renters.
- In Bethlehem . . . we are not seeing development of units that are affordable for the work force, for the middle class.
- In 2010 we had 20,000 rentals that charged over \$1000/month for rent, in 2019 we now have 45,000 rentals that charge over \$1000/month.
- In Bethlehem because of the pandemic we are looking at 27% of the work force at risk of job loss or have lost their jobs.
- We formed the Affordable Housing and Inclusionary Task Force to try to come up with remedies, to try to figure out ways, how can we do housing in Bethlehem that is affordable.
- It doesn't mean housing that is at the poverty level of income.
- It is for those who are in the work force, those who are in the middle class and the lower middle class.
- All sides in the Task Force presented their challenges.
- We certainly had our differences surrounding the mechanics of affordable housing.
- But we all agreed that a tool box is what needs to be developed.

- We don't need more high-end luxury rentals.
- But I think the community needs to be aware that with the incentives some of them may be less appealing.
- Bethlehem is a gem in so many ways . . . diverse and progressive and has good values . . . a community built on the backs of men and women who wanted more than to have a stable home and neighborhood in which to raise a family.
- Many of those neighborhoods were built as workforce housing for those who worked on the canals and in the steel mills etc.
- And we owe it to our predecessors as well as our current residents to insure that we are truly inclusive and that we offer mixed income level housing for all.
- We want the City to be seen as welcoming to all and as such provide housing that will not make renters and homeowners cost-burdened.
- We need to develop a continuum of programs and services to address housing.
- At the one end . . . shelter for homeless folks . . . priority . . . happen soon . . . and affordable for the working class.
- We're going to come up with a solid tool box . . . to incentivize housing that is affordable.

to be continued . . .