

# The case for the defense: the 2 W. Market St. neighborhood is “very commercial”

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Neighborhoods, Northside January 10, 2020

 96th in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St. 

Gadfly spent another long night Wednesday at the Zoning Hearing Board at which the owner of 2 W. Market St., the neighbors of 2 W. Market St., and the City are locked like Middle East countries in a feud of such longstanding duration that it's almost impossible to remember anymore what the core issues are.

Those issues are lost in the legal weeds. Gadfly invites you to peek at the last 45 minutes of Wednesday's meeting ([begin around min. 4:15:00](#)), for a mind-numbing City-lawyer-led tour of city properties by a civil engineer, who, rather amazingly, was permitted to testify as an expert witness on zoning.

Gadfly assumes this kind of thing was necessary for the City to make its case and the attorney to earn his keep, but it was not spectator-friendly. God bless the Board members. One of whom appears to be looking for divine intervention during this punishing latter testimony. One could better hope that he has discovered the beauty in the Town Hall ceiling that Dana Grubb has just revealed to us.



There was no resolution Wednesday night. We look forward to another try at such next Monday night.

“Some people may wonder why this matters so much and see it as a tempest in a teapot,” neighbor team member Barbara Diamond says in yesterday’s explanatory post in this series.

Yes, some of you Gadfly followers ARE wondering that. Couldn’t we all be making better use of our time, you ask?

Yes, Gadfly hears that.

So what is the City/Marketer case?

Gadfly has done exhaustive presentation of the Marketer position in past posts when as many as 12 or 15 residents testified in their favor at previous meetings. [See here](#) for one example among many posts.

But the City/Marketers only presented one testifier this time.

So — since in Gadville we always try to present all sides — let’s look at the testimony of Suzanne Virgilio, owner of the Bethlehem Inn Bed &

Breakfast catercorner from 2 W. Market, the sole resident witness put on by the City.

But, first, let's familiarize ourselves with the 2 W. Market "neighborhood."

2 W. Market is at the corner of New and Market. Gadfly bets we all have passed it scores if not hundreds of times.

But let's try to "see" it right now before listening to Virgilio. If the technology works, click here for the [google map](#) in (I hope) the mode that will enable you to travel east and west on Market as well as north and south on New. (If the link doesn't work, you can google-map 2 W. Market yourself and maneuver around in the street view.)

The idea is to see what Virgilio sees as she stands at the intersection of New and Market.

Ok, now listen to her testimony.

[https://youtu.be/NqsitqP3\\_9k](https://youtu.be/NqsitqP3_9k)

*Gadfly apologizes that his camera position and YouTube's choice of image make Mrs. Virgilio look like a mob informant secretly testifying before a Congressional committee*

- "Our objective in purchasing the property was to run a bed & breakfast at that location."
- "We did so specifically at this location because it was a great business location."
- "If we were looking to buy a home to raise our children in, we would not have chosen this location."
- "But it was ideal for business."

*How would you characterize the nature of the neighborhood?*

- “Obviously we’re within the historic district, but within the historic district there’s many different personalities.”
- “That’s what makes it very appealing . . . in a downtown area you can live on a residential street, but you also can live in a more commercial area.”
- “Which is how I characterize the neighborhood at the corner of New and Market.”
- “It’s a very commercial area. It has a 4-way traffic light. It has double yellow lines which indicate a heavily traffic’d area.”
- “Up until this year we had a LANTA bus stop directly in front of our home. I don’t think residential areas necessarily have that.”
- “We have a school directly across the street, with drop-offs, pick-ups, school buses, parents, etcetera.”
- “While maybe some areas in the historic district pose a more residential feel, certainly that’s not the case at the corner of New and Market.”
- It’s an area in which there are parking meters, already existing offices, and there has been no increase in traffic as a result of the 2 W. Market business.

*Have you observed any negative effects in the neighborhood?*

- “Absolutely not.”
- Quite the contrary, I thing the improvements made to that property have upped the bar.”
- “Our own property value has increased since that property has been renovated.”
- “On New St., two houses on New St. from us, sold for very, very high amounts and sold quickly.”
- “On Market St. two doors down from us another property sold very quickly.”

- “And I think that has a great deal to do with what has been done to 2 W. Market St.”
- “It’s improved the neighborhood. It’s improved property value. It’s been a great improvement overall.”

*Have you noticed any creeping commercialization in, say, the past five years?*

- “In my immediate 4-corner area, I can’t think of anything that has become commercial.”

Ok, so here is the only testimony by a resident put on by the City/Marketer to defend against the claim by the other neighbors that the zoning amendment permitting a business use at 2 W. Market in a residential district is invalid.

What are you thinking?

*to be continued . . .*