

Clarifying the development process

The Bethlehem Gadfly Affordable Housing, Modest proposals, Neighborhoods, Serious Issues, Southside August 2, 2019

(Latest post on such topics as Neighborhoods, Southside, Affordable Housing)

You know what you need to do:

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Mayor Donchez: rdonchez@bethlehem-pa.gov

City Council: c/o cityclerk@bethlehem-pa.gov

Morning Call letter to editor:

<https://www.mcall.com/opinion/readers-react/mc-letter-to-the-editor-ngux-htmlstory.html>

Today is recycle day.

Gadfly would take you back to two of his “modest proposal” posts (for the full thread of modest proposals, see under Topics on the sidebar).

Both have to do with Gadfly’s hunger for information.

In “[The more the merrier](#),” Gadfly modestly proposed “that the half-dozen or so ‘independent’ Authorities be requested to attend at least two City Council meetings per year, once in the first six months and once in the second, to report on current activities and future plans and to receive

comments and questions from both Council members and the general public.”

And, building on that idea, in [“An even merrier more,”](#) Gadfly modestly proposed “that each [City] department head come to a meeting twice a year, once in the first half and once in the second, and briefly tell ‘us’ what’s happening in that department. . . . Our Council meetings are ‘live’ and on video now. We could announce a schedule of such guest appearances – ‘coming attractions’ — and promote them in a modest way. People with interest in certain areas could be alerted to attend or tune in or catch up later.”

Gadfly was thinking about these two proposals — aimed at greater exchange of information — aimed at greater transparency, visibility, accountability — in regard to what he called the “teachable moment” when [the Mayor responded to the letter from the South Bethlehem Historical Society](#).

The Mayor said, ” I also hope you understand that there is a process that each developer has to go through. . . . There are various City departments, boards, authorities[,]** and commissions that assist with development,” etc., etc.

“I also hope you understand” — well, not necessarily.

Lou James and the board of the South Bethlehem Historical Society have been around for a long time. Maybe they need no tutorial.

But Gadfly thinks most of “us” do need one.

To Gadfly — who sees himself as your average citizen — the development process is pretty much shrouded in mystery.

Here's what Gadfly means by a "teachable moment" in this case.

This would have been a good opportunity to lay out and walk us through the generic development process in detail.

Gadfly has so many questions.

Where does a project start — with a developer or with the City? Are there conversations, arguments, negotiations over aesthetic as well as technical matters? What give-and-take goes on? What kind of projects are sought, what turned away? Who are the key people at the key junctures in the process? What sticky points arise, and how do they get reconciled? How much control does the City have? Where does "history" get on the table? That kind of thing.

A presentation about the steps or phases in a generic development process would be illuminating and would be sure to stimulate questions leading to a better understanding of how we get what we get.

Gadfly can see this as a valuable example of a department presentation at a City Council meeting he modestly proposes above.

*** *Prof Gadfly — Conan the Grammarian to several decades of Lehigh students — is a proponent of the Oxford comma and just had to insert it here.*