

Final observations on 2 W. Market – Part 4: the Great Divide (74)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues, Southside December 29, 2018

(74th in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St.)

The 2nd round of supporting statements on 2 W. (69)

To Gadfly, one of the most noticeable rifts between Council members centered on visions of the Southside.

Let's remember that Gadfly #1 Stephen Antalics – a perennial Southside warrior – introduced the powerful cancer analogy in his testimony against the 2 W. Market petition. He pointed to the cancer that attacked Southside neighborhoods several decades ago by a small zoning change to favor developers – a change in the definition of family to include five unrelated persons. He raised the specter of the same thing happening in the Northside Historical District through an analogous seemingly small, seemingly innocuous zoning change.

CW Negrón linked her negative vote on the 2 W. Market text amendment petition directly to the image Antalics raised, recounting the sad feeling she felt driving with her daughters through the neighborhood from Hayes St. toward Five Points.



In the second statement supporting his yes vote at the December 18 meeting, CM Callahan vigorously denounced the consistently negative image of the Southside promulgated by Negrón and Antalics and perhaps others — as well as, Gadfly feels, the implication that the City has not done enough for the Southside.

The rift is stunning. The Great Divide is stunning. Where CW Negrón sees the Southside through the prism of neighborhoods sadly changed into student housing, CM Callahan sees the new life of charter schools, shops, restaurants, and so forth breathed into the Southside by huge amounts of development dollars.

CW Negron looks to the past, what was once there, what's been lost. CM Callahan looks to the present and the future.

Put CW Negron at the corner of 5th and Polk and CM Callahan at 3rd and Polk — .2/mile and a 5-minute walk apart – and they might as well be on the North and South Poles.

The vision chasm between Negron and Callahan on the issue of the soul of the Southside is stunning.

And complex.

Because it's tied in to money and seeming favors given to people with big money.

So discussion of the Southside here in this post bleeds into Gadfly's next post on 2 W. Market and then into discussion of the recent 306 S. New case.

But for now let's try just to parse out CM Callahan's agitation about negative views of the Southside. He sees such criticism almost as a personal affront. You can see here how developers and development money are wrapped up in his bruised feelings.



Use the link at the top or bottom of this page to listen to the full second comment on December 18, for you should hear his urgency in his own voice. But here is a selection focusing on his Southside feelings.

“I want to say something that's been bothering me for a little bit. So last meeting we had people criticizing stuff going on in the Southside, and as Mr. Waldron said, every time there's a controversial topic there's a variety of people who come out and start listing all these variety of uncertainties. . . . We spent \$65m in investment in the last year on the Southside, and we have a regular speaker [Antalics] here who every single meeting rips the Southside about how terrible it is. We got a Councilwoman last week who was doing [Negron] . . . I went over there, the mayor of the Southside, Joe D'Ambrosio, been in business 55 years, lived there this whole entire time . . . tell me [speaking to Joe] when this euphoric state of the Southside was? Was it better 10 years ago? No. Was it better 20 years ago? No. [etc.] . . . I don't know when this utopia

Southside occurred. . . . I've never seen in my lifetime . . . 45 years . . . I've never seen the Southside better. It's thriving, it's vibrant. And there's been a lot of effort on many administrations and many different people on Council to try to better that area — 3rd and New St, people against it. 510 Flats, people against it [etc.]. . . . I would hate to see where we would be as a City with some of the same people criticizing 1 E. Broad. . . .

Sands bring in \$9.5m. . . . Sands brings in more money per year than the Bethlehem Steel in its heyday. There were naysayers against it. . . . This stuff doesn't just happen because it's a sure thing. It's because people are doing their due diligence and trying to do their best for the city. Who's paying the damn bills? 300 people, professionals, with disposable incomes down to that corner, people complained and bitched and moaned about it. Some people call them CAVE people, Citizens against Virtually Everything. No matter what you do, no matter what you say, it's always, there always a group that comes out of the woodwork."

A couple things jump out at Gadfly.

Like "Who's paying the damn bills?" That line stopped Gadfly short. He does not think of money first. He is glad that somebody (somebodies) does. Gadfly recognizes that he does not know nearly enough about how the City raises (and spends, for that matter) money. And could use several good tutorials on that score. CM Callahan sees himself as a man with eyes firmly fixed on the bottom line.

Like the CAVE people. Ugh. The undisguised scorn, the cynicism, the lack of understanding in that characterization is very disturbing.

Does the Great Divide matter? Is there hope of bridging the divide? Should anybody care about bridging the divide? Does the divide have operational consequences? Can CW Negron and CM Callahan work together?

Gadfly thinks their views on and values of the Southside sure tell us a lot about who Council-folk Negron and Callahan are.

What do you see, think?

The actual words from the December 18 meeting on which these observations are based can be found in [The 2nd round of supporting statements on 2 W. \(69\)](#). Gadfly always suggests that you go to the unmediated source and make your own observations. Gadfly's reflections on the first round of supporting statements can be found in [Critiquing the votes \(65\)](#)