

“Communication doesn’t seem to be as important as it really should”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police June 19, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Gadfly loves your voices.

An important thing that Gadfly has tried to do is amplify and disseminate citizen comments, to give them more “hang time,” and thereby to provide models of participation, encouraging others to civic engagement.

In that respect, one of the casualties of the pandemic has been the shrinkage of citizen comment at City Council meetings. Council has provided us with the means to comment, but the numbers have dwindled.

But Gadfly would call your attention to the comments of Greg Zahm at last Tuesday’s City Council meeting. Please listen to the recording; don’t just scan Gadfly’s summary text. Hear the voice of the thoughtful, concerned resident. Gadfly misses being able to take and post close-up videos of such presentations to enhance the impact of such words on us.

Audio Player not available in this archive

1) Mr. Zahm asked the 6 questions that he asked of the Mayor and Council in a letter of June 3, a letter, he said, that has not been answered:

1) What are we doing in our city to insure justice, care, and protection of and from Ben Franklin’s “unaffected” — **mentioned by Mayor Donchez** — for our affected brothers and sisters who still suffer with incredible resilience?

2) What changes have been instituted since the last time we met after the violent death of a black man at the hands of the police in America?

3) What leadership messages are we sending based on our actions within and based on our direct communications with the outside, my point being that I really feel like communication is lacking?

4) Will you ask the affected what they need?

5) Will you identify the affected directly? As far as I am aware, they remain unnamed.

6) So what changes do the City leadership recommend now on behalf of our very diverse family? And when will leadership speak with all of its people? . . . Something should have been said to the public much more broadly and loudly. I get the feeling the City has not expressed urgency on behalf of a large part of our family.

2) “Why were Councilman Colon and Councilwoman Negron not a party to that **June 9 memo** [of Councilmembers Reynolds and Crampsie Smith]? That’s a little shocking to me. Hopefully they were, but I’d like to hear that. Why doesn’t Council already have the requested information? Why is that information not already available to the public?”

3) “What does the City leadership have to say in response to the Bethlehem Gadfly post of Lehigh’s **Ms. Breena Holland?** She asked numerous questions regarding the treatment of Bethlehem citizens. I’d like to hear those questions answered publicly.”

4) “I’d like to know what minority candidates were considered for those positions [up for appointment at the meeting]. If for privacy reasons you can’t say who, of course, well how many were considered? How many resumes were received? I think this is a real serious issue. And how are they solicited resumes? And should these methods be reconsidered?”

“So ultimately probably the theme of this is communication. I’m really kind of stunned that while things are unfolding and still are that communication really doesn’t seem to be as important as it really should.”

Lot to chew on here from Mr. Zahm. As Gadfly said at the June 3 Council meeting, Mayor Donchez has a quiet style, he’s a quiet leader, but if too quiet, that can feel like non-leadership. Gadfly has several times expressed the wish that the Mayor would “step out” more — ha! Gadfly better watch what he wishes for! The issue of candidates for committees was raised vigorously by Councilwoman Van Wirt at the meeting, so look for a later post on that. Related to that issue, Gadfly

has been thinking about the 2021 elections and hoping for minority candidates. "Communication" = same root word as "community," Gadfly's aphrodisiac word. Good stuff here.