

Bethlehem Food Co-Op: enthusiasm for the project but concerns about financing

The Bethlehem Gadfly Bethlehem Food Co-Op, Co-Op, Bethlehem Food November 8, 2019

 *The latest in a series of posts on City government* 

Barbara Diamond enjoys retirement as Lehigh University Director of Foundation Relations by engaging in various activities and organizations hopefully for the betterment of the community. Her particular interests at the moment are preventing gun violence, local government ethics reform, and Bethlehem Democratic Committee work.

Dear Gadfly,

I have been following the recent commentary about the BFC. Many thanks to you for your research and Dana for his expertise to help us consider whether using these important grant programs are appropriate, especially in the amount proposed, for this purpose.

I am also a BFC member; I believe I was #297 or 298 at a time when the goal was 300 members to get off the ground. That was about 3 years ago. I understand that such a major endeavor takes more capital than originally expected.

I remain enthusiastic about the project, but I also have concerns about financing the project with such a large grant from those programs. Is the BFC the highest and best use of those precious community development funds? As you have proposed, the city should provide more information about why it selected this program for a grant of this significant amount.

I appreciate Kathy Fox's comment about some of the good things the BFC is doing in the community and finding in their By-laws that they are a non-profit is reassuring.

I think it would be further reassuring if the public and the Council could learn from the city and/or the BFC about how the \$200,000 + funds collected from the public so far have been deployed, as well as the \$50,000 grant from the city. A bit of transparency would help.

Dana's suggestion that the BFC consider a low-interest loan from the DCED seems like a good way to go too.

Barbara