

# Adding to Dr. Van Wirt's Fantastic Ideas (5)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues September 20, 2018

*(5<sup>th</sup> in a series of posts on parking)*

*Breena Holland is an Associate Professor at Lehigh University in the Department of Political Science and the Environmental Initiative. She is a past and current director of Lehigh University's South Side Initiative.*

Gadfly, I would like to add one idea for offsetting any loss of money that might come from the kind of system Dr. Van Wirt is proposing, which will be so much better for our small businesses. My idea is that the parking lease prices in the garages be raised to cover the cost of per space debt service on the bonds used to build the garage. For the New Street Garage, this would not raise prices on the cost of an annual parking lease until 2020, but then the prices would rise significantly (almost double).

The permanent users of garages built by a public authority that floats tax-payer-backed bonds to cover the construction costs should have to pay the cost of at least the debt service on those bonds. This might also incentivize getting these users to contribute to the construction costs in order to keep the overall parking lease price lower.

At the New Street Garage, Lehigh University and the developer who owns the building attached to the garage by the glass walkway have a number of leased parking spaces. Neither the developer nor the University (nor St. Luke's Hospital, who will also be a big user of the garage) contributed to covering any of the construction costs of the garage, and neither the hospital nor the university pays local taxes.

I know everyone appreciates these institutions, but I don't think meter prices should go up on everyone to pay for their parking spaces. Their parking lease price should at a minimum cover the per-space debt service on the per-space cost of constructing the garage. This would diminish some of the costs of garage construction that is now requiring the meter rate increase.

Hopefully the institutions that are going to be getting leased spaces at the forthcoming Polk Street Garage will put some “skin in the game.” This is what Greg Zebrowski advocated in reference to what the non-public beneficiaries of the New Street Garage should do to help cover the construction costs.

Breena