

The Bethlehem Parking Authority discusses the meeting-time issue

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Serious Issues July 25, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts on City government)

Primarily as a result of Councilwoman Van Wirt and resident Diane Szabo Backus turning on some heat several months back about the inability of or inconvenience for many residents to make a City Planning Commission meeting on Martin Tower at the 4 o'clock hour, the Mayor has tried to make some changes in the spirit of enabling greater citizen participation.

Dear to Gadfly's heart and mission.

Gadfly's been following the Mayor's request to the City ABC's (Authorities, Boards, and Commissions) that meet before 6PM to move to later in the day to give citizens more access — figuring that the majority of people who work cannot make the afternoon times — and to have their meetings live-streamed and archived.

Which means that a group like the Bethlehem Parking Authority that meets at 4PM — and that has a headquarters in the North Street Garage — would need to change locations as well as time, moving to Town Hall.

Gadfly attended the BPA monthly Board meeting yesterday at which the Mayor's request was discussed and made the following pitch for acceding to the Mayor's request and moving to Town Hall, what he called "the People's House."

AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE

Followers might remember that Gadfly has reported on such discussions at BRIA, the Planning Commission, and the Redevelopment Authority.

So far only the Redevelopment Authority has acceded to the Mayor's request. The RA moved its time to 5PM in Town Hall, as well as moving from third Thursday to fourth.

BRIA agreed to move previously recognized "hot" meetings to a later time.

The PC wants to wait till a meeting with full membership to discuss more before deciding.

In his public comment at the beginning of yesterday's BPA meeting that you can hear at the link above, Gadfly rehearsed the objections voiced at the other ABC meetings, asking the Board to look favorably on the Mayor's request.

Gadfly likes the opportunity to enable you to hear/see the ABC's that are making decisions that affect us, so you can hear the BPA Board discussing the Mayor's request here.

The main reluctance to move to a later time was that long experience showed that most of the time it was "just us" at a meeting and that it would be "foolish" to change — and that there could/would be negative feeling if we moved to 6 or 7 and there was "nobody here."

There was recognition, though, that there were hot topics for which the meeting, properly advertised, could/should be moved to 6PM.

And there was recognition that audio recordings of the meeting already routinely done could/will be posted on line with the minutes.

And there seemed to be acquiescence that if the Mayor was adamant, a move to a later time would be agreeable.

So, bottom-line, the regular BPA board meeting time will stay at 4 in BPA headquarters, hot topic meetings will be moved to 6, and meeting audio will be posted online.

And that the August meeting — where plans for the Polk Street Garage will be finalized — will be moved to 6PM.

Gadfly feels that the default position for meeting times should be when most of the general public can attend regardless of historical body counts. That's where discussion of the meeting time should start — at a time most convenient for the public.

Gadfly also likes the move to Town Hall if only for the symbolism of moving out of the BPA bunker into the “People’s House.”