

Martin Tower and the Styles of Public Participation (18)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Environmental Advisory Council, Gadfly's posts, Martin Tower, Serious Issues April 29, 2019

(18th in a series on Martin Tower)

Martin Tower demolition May 19

www.martintowerbethlehem.com

Lot going on. And Gadfly has let several topics fall behind. Martin Tower one of them.

He has a kind of wrap-up post on this current phase of the MT doings in mind, but first he wants to use the public response to the proposed MT plan for a different purpose.

The Gadfly project slogan is “Good conversation builds community.”

About a month ago in a private email a Gadfly follower called him “the Pied Piper of civic engagement.”

Now that was striking. A powerful branding. But kind of embarrassing and disconcerting too.

He tried to laugh it off. Then forget it. Wouldn't work.

Might as well own it.

No question Gadfly before he was Gadfly fell in love with the sound of your voices in the public comment spaces at City Council meetings.

And wanted to capture them.

And — here goes — draw even more people to speak/write out.

Pied Piperling.

Somewhere the professor who reinvented himself as Gadfly learned that the Aztec word for teacher was “one who makes you put on a face.”

He would say that the goal of his classes was to make you put on a face. To speak/write your own individual thoughts in your own individual way and thereby to feel empowered and thereby to feel individual — and thereby to have a “face” recognized and respected by others.

Gadfly wants everybody to post here. Gadfly wants everybody to speak at Council. (President Waldron just fainted.)

But some people say they can't be like you, Gadfly, without realizing that the professor who reinvented himself as Gadfly is painfully shy and would wall himself in his office the hour before class mustering courage. Listen to the modest proposal audio he posted a short while ago, and you can hear his voice crack part way through as the mustered courage wanes.

Everyone can do it. In his or her own way.

And I want to make that point by contrasting the polar opposite styles of Diane Szabo Backus and Brian Hillard during public comment at the April 16 City Council meeting, available on video here:

VIDEO UNAVAILABLE ACCORDING TO YOUTUBE

Brian (begin min. 13:10) is soft-spoken, calm, sober, focused, rational, cerebral, speaking a polished piece of writing.*** *Beautiful*.

Diane (begin min. 5:30) is “a little nervous,” reading from what look like handwritten scratched notes on a tear-off pad any of us might doodle on at the kitchen table, emotional, so emotional that her body has to move, her arms wave, her fists pump, her fingers point, her knees buckle and dance, she turns to the left, she turns to the right, she ups the Council president’s response to a question she shouldn’t have asked, she confronts the Mayor. *Beautiful*.

Great complementary styles.

Head and heart.

We need them both and all the shades in-between.

When will you put on your face?

*** *Be sure to read Brian’s essay. It’s very good: [Hillard – Martin Tower Development Proposal](#)*