

# Gadfly cross-examines at the Thursday stakeholder meeting on the Martin Tower demolition (49)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Martin Tower, Serious Issues May 11, 2019

*(49th in a series on Martin Tower)*

*Martin Tower demolition May 19*

[www.martintowerbethlehem.com](http://www.martintowerbethlehem.com)

There were two meetings on Thursday May 9 — for the stakeholders (residents and businesses) in the exclusion zone at 3PM in Town Hall and for the general public at 6PM in Nitschmann Middle School.

Both meetings were run well by Bethlehem Emergency Management Coordinator Robert Novatnack. Novatnack — affable, courteous, patient, knowledgeable — set an excellent tone for both meetings. The Mayor made clear several times that day as well as at Council two nights before that he wanted everybody to have the opportunity to speak and that he was willing to stay as long as that took. In Gadfly's opinion, public comment was amply solicited and welcome and, except for one ugly blip late in the night meeting, the atmosphere was cordial. Well done.

Gadfly will talk about the meetings one at a time.

Awareness of or concern for long-term health issues did not seem much present at the stakeholders meeting.

But for 10 minutes Gadfly got to play the lawyer he always wanted to be, and specifically here played the role of a lawyer taking a deposition.

The deposed are Jim Santoro from Controlled Demolition Inc. and Duane Wagner from owner Herrick/Ronca.

Please listen.

Gadfly always urges that you go to the primary source and make your own conclusions.

Do your own thinking.

There are bullet notes below that you can browse as you listen or use to refresh your memory afterwards.

But please listen and think about what you hear.

It takes but 10 minutes.

And then join me in formulating some take-aways.

### **AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE**

- **what is the nature of the contaminants now in the building? (a minute or two in the beginning of the audio was lost)**
  - only concrete dust no different than the long-standing Casilio business has been expelling for years

- **Concrete dust is not dangerous even in the quantity that will be released at this time?**
  - the same quantity of dust is released in conventional demolition and implosion; you can avoid exposure in implosion because of the short duration; conventional demolition means weeks or months of constant exposure
  - we don't encourage people to come out during the process; stay indoors during the process
  - stay at home, watch it on television
- **why don't you encourage people to be outside during the process?**
  - why do you want to be out in the dust? (tonal implication being that it is not a good idea)
  - the vast quantity of the dust is going to settle on the property
  - give us a chance to clean up before you come outside
- **So somebody standing outside downwind to get a look at this, you're comfortable that that's safe — people with good health — you would recommend that they stay inside? (awkwardly phrased)**
  - I would never recommend that (being outside), but it should be ok
  - if you have a respiratory condition, absolutely don't go out, that's not being smart
- **But people with good health, you wouldn't recommend it, but you're not saying they shouldn't do it**
  - I don't recommend people standing in the middle of the road either (a bit garbled)
  - take things and be sensible about them
  - if you're going outside to watch this, stand upwind
- **How far do you consider the dust will go?**

- read a study many years ago that can't be pinpointed that said 140 miles
- **Could you point us to an independent general scientific study?**
  - there haven't been many of them
  - Phila, dust-sampling over 30 years of their work there has never found any contaminant
  - air quality returns to normal 6 hours later
  - there's a spike of dust in the air and then it goes away
- **You are saying that for people who may be worried, perhaps unreasonably so, about health, there isn't an independent general study, scientific study of this kind of implosion that has been going on for decades?**
  - correct
  - *Gadfly then said there are studies on the web, some saying implosions shouldn't be done in metropolitan areas — the problem is knowing which studies to believe*
- **I would feel comfortable with a recommendation of a scientific study about the long-term health effects of implosion.**
  - to be fair you'd have to study conventional demolition too
- **There are several kinds of demolition: what was the factor in choosing implosion? Was it cost? Was it time? Was it health?**
  - time and safety; safer and faster
  - about same amount of dust as demolition that's occurred on that site for the past 18 months
  - not one comment, complaint, or concern during that time
  - there's acute exposure and people are recommended to stay inside if they think it's going to bother them

- **“Shelter in place” is a kind of awesome term.**
  - stay inside or go away for a short period of time
  - same amount of dust, same kind of degree we’ve been working with for 18 months and no issues
  - Burnside now has to clean Casilio’s dust off their vegetables, same thing
- **Is the dust only a problem when it’s in the air?**
  - Yes, and you only worry about respirable dust
  - monitoring that will be done is only of respirable dust
  - Lots of hospitals use us for good reasons, to get it over quickly, protect people
- **In choosing this mode of demolition, was the cost a factor, . . . Is this more expensive, less expensive?**
  - cost was not a factor
  - decisive factors = safety and time

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Join me in compiling a list of take-aways from this developer and demolitioner “testimony.”

1) They are not recommending people be outside (stay in and watch it on tv). My sense is that that message needs to be amplified by the City. People should be actively discouraged from watching in person.

2) Silica is a component of concrete, and silica is dangerous — perhaps mainly from long-term exposure – but there has been testimony that one exposure can be deadly. The claim that there are no contaminants needs to be interrogated.

3) The argument that Bethlehem is habituated to Casilio without harmful effect and the Lehigh Valley is habituated to the concrete industry (like in Coplay, Bath, etc.) without harmful effect needs to be interrogated.

4) There must be relevant scientific studies.

5) We are given no data about anything. (You know who you are)

6) Given time, “we” could have commissioned somebody to review the scientific literature and digest it for us.

7) Since the danger here is invisible — not apparent for years and years — the argument that they have been working for 18 months without a complaint is without merit.

8) The argument that the same amount of dust is produced over time by conventional demolition as implosion needs to be interrogated — is that true? And would a big dose of dust all at once not possibly be more deleterious than small doses over time?

9) It’s hard to believe that cost was not the driving factor — a web source says implosion is the least expensive mode of demolition.

10) Bottom line: “we” take their word for everything; no data.

*Chew on this, and Gadfly will shortly continue with discussion of the night meeting.*