

Every appearance of unconcern is magnified

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government February 7, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on City Government* 

So, as a framework for further discussion, let's answer the questions that Gadfly posed in his last post.

Why do "we" speak at Council meetings?

There are various reasons. But often it is because we have some pressing problem or concern. We come to City Council because it is the "face" of city governance. In these instances we come because we need help.

What do we expect of Council members when "we" speak about pressing problems or concerns at Council meetings?

Attention. Respect. Empathy. Knowledge. Advice. Guidance. Direction. In short, a willing ear, a big heart, and a sure hand.

Why is there a feeling among many residents that it is not worthwhile for "us" to speak at Council meetings?

Because nobody cares. Because nobody listens. Which isn't true, of course. Far from it. But every bit of evidence to the contrary perpetuates the myth that it's a waste of time to talk to City Hall. Every even appearance of unconcern is magnified.

So go to the tape, [min. 2:50-6:50 of the city video](#) of the February 4 City Council meeting.

Listen to resident #1 but watch Councilman Callahan.

This may be the first time resident #1 has addressed Council. Gadfly doesn't remember seeing him over the last two years. It's a model comment. In clear respectful tone, resident #1 states that he and his partner are "feeling increasingly unsafe" in their neighborhood. They have five children. He has witnessed drug deals and a drive-by shooting and suffered various thefts. He makes two specific commonsense recommendations for increasing the safety of his

neighborhood. He thanks everybody and acknowledges official response. And he only takes four minutes, a good minute under his allotted time!

Councilman Callahan does not appear to be paying attention to this serious concern and careful presentation. He may be paying attention, but he doesn't appear to be.

Let's be fair. Gadfly multi-tasks. You multi-task. Gadfly can walk and chew gum. You can too. Councilman Callahan may be productively multi-tasking. After all, he is not going to be called on to respond to the resident. If there is response, it will be up to the president of Council. So Councilman Callahan may be paying attention or as much as he needs to. But it does not appear so.

There is not even the appearance of paying attention.

Frankly, Gadfly was irked. And he was to speak next.

to be continued . . .