

Discussion on whether or not to move on to vote on the wage equity proposal

The Bethlehem Gadfly Wage equality March 3, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on wage equality* 

Wage Equality Memo (1)

In the previous post on the topic of discussion of Councilman Callahan's wage equity ordinance at our Human Relations committee meeting February 25, we focused on Councilwoman Van Wirt's belief in the need for more discussion on the enforcement aspect of what everybody agrees is a good ordinance.

It seems that in other cities the enforcement element of a wage equity ordinance aimed at protecting women from financial exploitation has been handled by a City Human Rights Commission. In Bethlehem, our Human Rights Commission (one of our volunteer ABC's) has previously indicated its inability to handle a projected number of cases that will arise from this ordinance.

Thus, Councilman Callahan, after discussion with the City administration and Solicitor Spirk, has modified what's done in the legislation in other places to make the magistrate court the locus of enforcement here. The aggrieved employee would, on the basis of this ordinance, bring a case before a magistrate, one in which, Councilwoman Van Wirt avers (with the agreement of Solicitor Spirk), she would need (or be best served) to retain a lawyer.

After Councilwoman Van Wirt, Chair Callahan turned to Councilwoman Negron and meeting guest Councilwoman Crampsie Smith for comment.

Councilwoman Negron, picking up the enforcement issue, asked Solicitor Spirk to research the possibility of lawyer fees being added to magistrate's fine — he agreed to do so.

Chair Callahan, holding to the position that the proposed ordinance is good as is, calls again for amendments or for voting (even with a negative

recommendation) to pass the ordinance on to full Council — which is not satisfactory to Councilwomen Van Wirt and Negron.

Councilwoman Crampsie Smith — a kind of “outsider” here since she is not a member of the committee — suggests coming back in a few weeks for focused discussion just on the enforcement angle.

<https://youtu.be/Ev6gwBL8n-Y>

One of the purposes of the gadfly project is to help you know your Councilpeople as well as possible so that you will be the most informed voters you can be.

This Council discussion over a kind of no-brainer basic ordinance is proving to be a good avenue for doing just that.

Gadfly hopes that you will listen here and to the following posts as the issues and the personal dynamics sharpen.

to be continued . . .