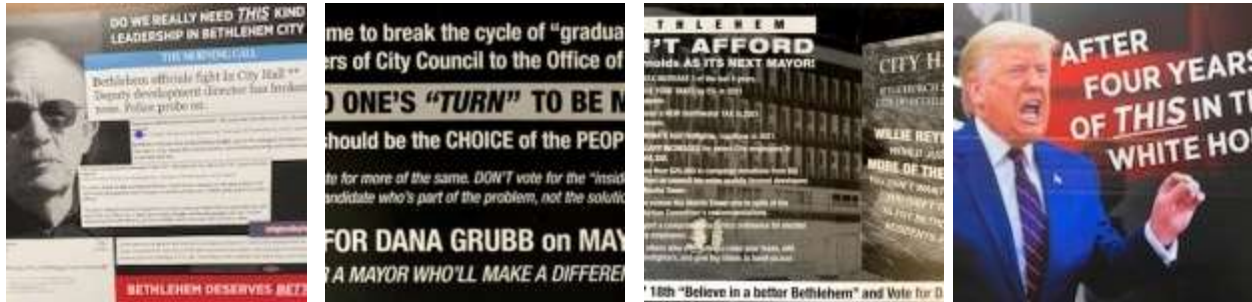


Gadfly wades in to the negative mayoral campaigning controversy

The Bethlehem Gadfly Candidates for election, Election May 7, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on candidates for election* 



Let's try to look at this negative mayoral campaigning controversy objectively.

Gadfly does not endorse candidates. He doesn't feel smart enough for that.

His interest is in providing information on everybody so that voters can make the most informed choice possible.

Gadfly has tried to make these pages open to all candidates in a balanced and even-handed way.

This morning, for instance, you can find a Grubb video followed by a clip from a classy Reynolds Town Hall, followed by both candidates together answering the same question.

All three without comment. Gadfly provides you with the primary sources. You are smart enough to assess and make up your own minds. You don't need Gadfly telling you how to vote. You shouldn't care how Gadfly votes.

Contributions from followers have leaned toward Grubb. Gadfly wishes there were more balance there for sure.

So let's try, try to look at the campaign mailer controversy objectively, without partisan lenses.

Gadfly, in fact, is putting on his professorial hat as well, trying to look at the Grubb and Reynolds mailers as if he were commenting on them as assignments in a writing class.

Readers should not take the following comments as endorsements for one candidate or another but a response to one element of their campaigns.

But an element that relates to something fundamental in both candidates.

Which is why Gadfly ventures into so vexed an area.

Gadfly did not get the Grubb mailer in the mail. Surprising. Not sure why. He's receiving a steady stream of other mailers. So he's on mailing lists.

He first learned of the Grubb mailer, in fact, from candidate Reynolds. His news was quickly accompanied by a flurry of "did you see this?" messages from followers.

There was a decent interval between these "be on the alert" messages and actually seeing the Grubb mailer.

Gadfly was prepared to be shocked.

He was not.

He was shocked — and not a pleasant shock — when he received (in the mail!) the Reynolds mailer.

Let him talk outloud as he tries to determine why the different readings on his shock meter.

First, It was clear to Gadfly that G was running as an "outsider," in fact had to run as an outsider. R has been a visible player for over a decade, he has a solid handful of major concrete accomplishments, he has a substantial financial "war chest," and he has run the table of

endorsements from the local political establishment (ha! except Councilman Callahan!).

So Gadfly expected at some point that G would have to try to put a dent in R's record. He would have to try to turn heads. How he would do it was the suspense.

When you put aside the ridiculous mailer claptrap of bolded letters, capitalized letters, all caps, strategic quotation marks, dramatic font shifts, warped photos (why do we mature people put up with such crap when it comes to elections? so childish), when you put all that aside, G's thesis (speaking under my prof hat) is "we" can't afford R. And he supports or bolsters that thesis with 9 reasons.

We have to give G his thesis. But Gadfly thought it was crafty. Frankly, Gadfly has thought that G doesn't have a chance in this election. R has so much going for him. An uphill climb for G. But he has identified a soft spot in focusing on the budget. On money matters. Actually, G identifies 2 soft spots. The other being the flap over the ethics ordinance. Pretty shrewd, thought Gadfly, who knows about as much about political strategy as you would expect from an English teacher.

But G has his thesis. So how effectively does he support it?

Take the 9 points one by one. Do they hold up.

Did R vote for a tax increase 3 of the last 4 years? Yes. Did R vote to raise taxes 5% this year? Yes. Did R vote for the stormwater tax? Yes. Did R vote to eliminate firefighters? Yes. Did R vote for those salary increases? Yes. Did R accept \$26,000 in campaign donations from big developers while usually voting their way? Yes. Did R vote to rezone Martin Tower in spite of EAC recommendations? Gadfly is not sure about this one. Did R not support a comprehensive ethics ordinance? Yes. Is R not backed by others who also voted for the above items in the 2022 budget? Yes.

Gadfly would say that G supported his thesis. Which is not to say that his points aren't arguable. Gadfly sees G laying out 9 talking points on which to engage R. Nothing wrong with that. And Gadfly would expect R to engage in return, to rebut. Which he is more than capable of. R is a powerful arguer. And, in fact, he has explicitly made effective responses

to most of these points in Gadfly's hearing already. His point about the danger in voting in block for a large ethics ordinance makes sense to Gadfly. R points out that G doesn't mention that in the last 5-6 years he has taken no contributions. That's an interesting point. And qualifies G's point. So R has responded in kind. He is perfectly capable of defending himself. And then one would expect that G would respond to R's responses, saying perhaps that R's silence on the ethics ordinance since 2017 indicates his indifference to it. Or whatever. But that is the cycle of legitimate back and forth that Gadfly expects.

Gadfly does not see what is so foul about the way G is playing hardball.

Gadfly does not understand **R's references** to attacks against the Mayor, Council colleagues, and the "fantastic women" running for Council. G has attacked the women running for Council??? Yiiii. Where? How? The prof in me says that calls out for specific example if it is going to have any force and impact. Of course, such things may be in the corners of social media in which Gadfly is unfamiliar, and he waits to be informed. But the point is that "as is" such an accusation has no basis for belief.

And Gadfly cannot understand the defenses of R by his Council colleagues, people whom R points to for support. Sorry, Gadfly cannot connect the dots between Councilwoman Van Wirt's **30 years reference** to anything in the G mailer. Gadfly needs help there. Councilman Colon's note appended to R's Facebook message decrying G's mailer does not mention the mailer at all and thus takes no position on it. Gadfly has not come across public statements regarding the G mailer by Councilfolk Negron and Waldron. One would not expect a statement by Councilman Callahan. The best response is by **Councilwoman Crampsie Smith**. Her point about the value of Council experience as preparation to be mayor is substantive and points to a soft spot in G's argument. But the amount of space given to the sterling traits of her family and R's family is, frankly, complete fog and off-point, says the prof — stick to examples of what's negative or erroneous in G. But the killer is the Councilwoman's concluding comment that R's campaign has focused "on the positives." Lehigh Valley for All, who endorsed him and now is looking for a direct apology to G, doesn't see his mailer that way.

Which brings us to R's mailer.

Gadfly was shocked.

Gobsmacked.

Gadfly didn't understand it at all. Didn't see the need for it. As he said before, Gadfly felt R a virtual shoo-in for election. The odds seemed to him stacked way, way against G. How could he understand R's move here? Frankly, it seemed a desperate move. (He felt the same way when he saw Lisa Boscola come around for a second endorsement. Calling in the cavalry?) And was R not simply shooting himself in the foot? The prof would beg him not to send that damn mailer. Please, Willie, no. Falling off the high road.

Gadfly's mailbox lit up with indignation.

Lehigh Valley for All suggests an apology.

Lehigh Valley for All considers it negative campaigning.

Gadfly has been aware of G's city hall incident for a long time. He wondered if it would become an issue if he ran for mayor. So it did. Gadfly is not a denizen of social media, but he was aware it was being talked about there early in the campaign. G faced up and posted an account of the event [here](#) on Gadfly March 11. He has heard him describe the incident at least twice since at candidate meeting-type events. It's not as if G was hiding this incident from his past. His account of events has been consistent. The story was "out there" with his explanation.

R supporters Shirley Morganelli and John Price (who people have suggested to me is a pseudonym) posted comments on Gadfly as a result of G's March 11 post. These posts prompted Gadfly to try to research the incident more — to go to the primary sources, as he likes to say — but right-to-know requests of police files from the city went nowhere. Dead end there.

Gadfly ultimately decided to let the matter be. G had not tried to hide the incident. He volunteered information about it. He told a story that was

consistent and explained his “side.” The incident was 17 years ago — virtually a generation ago. It was an isolated incident. As far as anybody knows, G’s life is not characterized by criminal misbehavior. To describe the event as G’s “history of workplace violence” as R and his supporters have done simply seemed to Gadfly a gross exaggeration and misrepresentation. An over-dramatization.

R **says** G’s mailer “could not go without a response.”

Agreed.

Most definitely.

For sure.

But not that kind of response.

Pound the hell out of him on the 9 points in his mailer. Yes. You are more than capable of doing so.

But the Trump mailer was beyond unfortunate.

Now, apologize, and get on with the last leg of the campaign.

Onward! Let the best man win!

As usual, Gadfly invites comment, waits to be slapped upside the head.