

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
For Candidates for City Council Vacancy
Seat of Eric R. Evans – Resignation Effective February 4, 2018
Vacancy to be Filled from March 6, 2018 to January 6, 2020

1. What uniquely qualifies you to serve on Bethlehem City Council?

I have been active in the community since 2008 and have followed issues before the City Council during that time. I have a understanding of how the Council works and familiar with all of the sitting members views on local governance. I possess a strong work ethic and desire to make the City of Bethlehem a great place to live long into the future. I have a strong environmental background and can use my knowledge and experience help with current initiatives that the Council is undertaking.

2. If this were a campaign for City Council, list the top three (3) priorities of your campaign platform.

Sustained Smart Green Development of our City – Explore and attract development and re-development of land within the City. Strongly encourage green development that encompasses renewable and/or non-fossil fuel alternatives within the design. Promote walkable, mixed use development and development that will enhance foot traffic to our downtowns. Continue to combat blighted and out-of-compliance properties utilizing our city inspectors and when necessary the judicial system.

Safety and Policing – Create more traffic calming measures throughout the city, especially around the schools, Determine areas that would benefit from installing speed humps and cross-walks with enhanced alerts to drivers. Promote police officer body cameras for all patrol personnel, request a review of the police training and operating procedures to ensure we maintain and improve upon our current high standard of professionalism.

Infrastructure – Aggressively maintain our streets within current budget constraints. Explore grants and other avenues of funding to improve on quality of life infrastructure throughout the city, especially in areas more densely developed. Work with larger developers to make traffic improvements that their properties will impact. Work to solve our current and future parking issues by use of technology and capital improvements to our facilities.

3. As several development projects are considered in the City, do you feel that Bethlehem can honor its architectural history while simultaneously promoting economic growth and business?

Development must fit in with the character of the neighborhoods, I would strongly opposed “cookie-cutter” development in almost all cases. The architecture design must contain decorative elements and scale that is appropriate to the neighborhood it is intended. The intended use of the property can not be inappropriate to the neighborhood causing hardship and distress to the surrounding neighbors. The city can work with amenable developers to make them revise plans that all parties can live with. It must use every avenue available to prevent developers that refuse to work with the City from building something that will cause harm to the City or neighborhood.

4. Do you feel that transportation is an important issue for the City of Bethlehem, and if so, how do you envision the City better meeting its transportation needs in the future?

Our transportation network involves many different aspects in the lives of those working, living and visiting our City. There has to be a hybrid of public transportation (locally and

regionally), road network for travel within and through the City, and a system of walking and biking paths/trails for human powered transportation. We also need development that will remove the need to utilize a vehicle for all of life's tasks.

I would advocate for commuter rail service to New York City and Philadelphia (although it not foreseeable that there is an opportunity for this in the next two years). I would support any good "walkable city" development. I support the building of a quality bus terminal in the Southside replacing the current one on Mechanic Street. I would work with developers that are going to impact traffic to improve and pay for the infrastructure to minimize the effect. I would support the pursuit of block grants and other funding to expand more "green" methods of transportation.

Combatting traffic congestion is important environmentally and improves quality of life. A quick-win fix but not without costs would be to conduct some traffic surveys in congested areas and modify the existing traffic signals. Installing smart signals with sensors, having different frequency of traffic lights and or allowing right turns on red during late night hours would possibly be an improvement on the actual traffic flow while reducing fuel usage and reducing idle emissions at traffic signal.

5. Several Members of City Council have stated it is their preference to select someone who will not seek election next year. If selected for this Council position, would you run for a seat on City Council in the Primary election this spring? Yes _____; No_____. You may provide additional comments, if any.

I can say with certainty that I will not run for the unexpired term in 2019. I have twice ran for local office in Somerville, NJ shortly after I graduated from college. I understand the effort and funding of such a campaign. I have always had the passion for community service and improving my community and have dedicated my efforts in helping others I feel will achieve that goal, since my unsuccessful bids. The passion to serve my community directly has never diminished. This opening in Council is at a time in my life where I can commit my efforts as a City Councilmember, but not at a time where I can commit the efforts to wage an election campaign in 2019. I also want to maintain the tradition of the recent appointed councilmembers who have not run for another term.

6. What is one issue you believe Bethlehem is currently not properly addressing and if on City Council how would you help in this area?

I believe we should be looking at reducing the speed and safety on our streets. Advocating to the Commonwealth to change the RADAR laws for local police. Identifying area to place speed humps to promote traffic calming and safety, place more speed indicator signs on the streets and place lighted warning signs at busy crosswalks.

7. What do you think about the idea of a pedestrian bridge over the Lehigh River, and what are your thoughts for potential funding sources?

It would be a nice thing but it seems impractical. The reality that it must cross both a river and an active rail service probably makes the design much more difficult and difficulties usually mean increased costs (possibly extreme increased costs). The fact that it seems impractical I would not want to utilize the City's funding and resources to further explore this. If an independent group can come up with a funding source for a detailed plan with estimated costs I have no problem reviewing it and its potential.

The three bridges we currently have in the city possess very usable walkways and stairs to gain access to areas on the other side. Maybe looking at improvement to the existing bridges may be more practical and affordable (possibly an elevator to augment the stairs).

8. What can be done to encourage more constituent participation in local Government, particularly in the budget process?

Getting people to participate in government with the Democratic Party has been something that I have been actively focused on for several decades now. The successes have never been to my satisfaction. Getting the message to the public and the desire for input is a priority, using press, social media and mailing.

It is difficult because the budgetary process though vital, is frankly not very “sexy”.

One thought is to have some more interaction with the speakers, maybe allow for four minutes of talk instead of five minutes followed by a two minute question/answer/response period. It would give the council an opportunity to thank the speaker and get some clarification, it might also make the speaker feel that what he/she/they are saying has been heard and considered.

9. What should be done with our golf course?

I generally lean to keeping governmental assets within the government and not privatize them. I am less adverse to allowing for contracting an entity to operate it as a city owned facility. I want the golf course to be a source of pride for the residents and visitors who use it. I know that there is need for maintenance and improvements that have significant costs.

The main goal is to achieve a high quality golf course that is more utilized by the public and affordable to the City. Not having a quality golf course is not an option.

10. What are your thoughts for the long term best solution for the pools in the City?

Improving one full service pool to accommodate the entire city, with satellite spray parks throughout the city. Establish a free/low cost, scheduled shuttle service with one or a few busses that can bring residents throughout the city to the main City pool on Illick’s Mill Road.

11. Within the next several years, the Parking Authority will need to replace the Walnut Street garage. How do you think the Authority and the City should plan for the financial and business impact of the construction of a new garage?

We need to review all of our parking needs of the Northside, since the Walnut Street Garage is a heavily utilized facility, we must determine how will the demolition and construction affect our City. The costs might be higher but the benefits might also be significant by expanding the parking facilities on West Broad Street by Main Street and East Broad Street by New Street prior to work on Walnut Street. This could minimize the impact on the closure and possibly scale back the size of the Walnut Street Garage and offer the unused land for other mixed use development.

12. One of City Council’s most important functions is to pass the yearly budget for Bethlehem. What ideas would you bring to City Council that involve the area of finances?

One of the primary outcomes in my tenure as an Environmental Engineer at SmithKline Beecham was identifying, quantifying and advocating savings that reduced the environmental impact by the facility while saving significant annual operating costs. I will make efforts to understand the procedures and methods of the city and try to identify alternative ways to

achieve similar or improved outcomes with a lower operating cost. I would look for more technological improvement opportunities like the recent refurbishment of our street lighting.

13. Making decisions on City Council often involves seeking compromises that balance the individual self-interests of multiple groups of people. How do you feel you can contribute to the culture of compromise that is necessary to a functioning legislative branch of government?

I want what is best for the community, in order to do what's best you need to know what the community is thinking and feeling. You also must have respect for your colleagues' and communities' opinions and ideas even if you don't agree. Sometimes even in disagreement there is common ground that can result acceptance and even improvement.

Often time the only people motivated to attend City Council Meetings are those who strongly support or oppose and initiative, but my just be the vocal minority. It is not wise to ignore that vocal minority but listen to their concerns or praises and incorporate their views into the final product if it makes sense or is practical.

This is one of the most difficult things for a representative of the community to do. You must trust and be confident of your judgement, to resist vocal opposition to your views you don't believe will work, while leaving an open mind to revise your thoughts when a good alternative is presented.

I have seen the City Council wrestle with some very highly charged and emotional decisions over the years. I have seen cooperation and compromise just about in every instance. I know I will work hard to continue that tradition.

14. 2017 saw City Council create several new initiatives relating to municipal climate action, neighborhood investment, open data and efficient city government. How do you feel you can participate in and add to these initiatives?

This is where I can bring my passions of making my community a better place to live for all to the City Council. These are areas that I have both strong interest in and expertise, especially the initiatives relating to municipal climate action. I have been an advocate or supporter of regional cooperation and government efficiency my entire adult life. I have a strong background of developing processes and procedures that work in real-life situations. I strive for elegant solutions that are not necessarily within the box.