



Minutes - Final

Public Works Committee

Wednesday, October 5, 2016

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Roll Call: Chairperson MacLean, Councilpersons McGuire and O'Connell

[15-1103](#)

R154

Recommends the Administration post the following signage on 7th Street: Calle Siete - in recognition and appreciation of the contributions, perspectives and value Latinos and Spanish speaking people add to our City

Sponsors: McGuire, Guridy, Mota and Affa

Attachments: [R154 Calle Siete](#)

[Philly China Town Example](#)

Mr. Ray O'Connell stated that he would like to hear from Mr. Messinger. He had a meeting with PennDot today concerning the signage.

Mr. Craig Messinger stated that they met with traffic PennDot representatives today and discussed the use of signage at the intersections. They discussed the MUTCD and that are the Rulings that handle signage. MUTCD does not cover any language that would be allowed on a permit at a signalized intersection. PennDot would allow the poled street name signs. They prefer it to be white, brown or blue. Having the white would have to have black letters and he would not recommend. All our road close signs or one-way signs are black and white. They do recommend either blue or brown with white lettering. He recommends there will be two signs at the intersection, criss-crossed. PennDot does not have any issues with that.

Mr. Ray O'Connell asked the approximation of the cost.

Mr. Craig Messinger stated estimating it would probably be around \$200 per corner. He will feel safe saying about \$400. He should a sign from Philadelphia. It would be something similar to that.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that this is a Resolution that he has been trying to put together. Part of the Resolution is co-sponsored by various Councilmembers. He thanked Mr. Messinger for his investigation finding out from PennDot if we can do this. He stated that America was built on

the backs on immigrants and English is the language of America. It is a diverse community that we have in Allentown. I think it is a good idea to do it. Seventh Street has been the street where most Hispanics, not exclusive set up their businesses. Over 67 percent of the businesses on Seventh Street are owned by Hispanics. We have a melting pot on Seventh Street. Spanish is the second largest language in the World. We live in the best country in the world and we are very blessed to live in this country. We should celebrate our cultures. We are not proposing to changing the name, we are just proposing to add Calle Siete. He stated that he would like to volunteer and go on Seventh Street. We can have a nice corridor. We have a wonderful group of not only Hispanics, but Ethiopians Restaurants, Chinese Restaurants, Syrians and many other merchants in the area. it is time for us, we are the majority of the community in the city and contributed largely to the city. We should appreciate the different cultures we have in the city. After we spoke last night with Peter Lewnes, he stated that we should have spoken to the board and I called the president of the board today and she feels that we should wait. He stated that Ms. Mota, Ms. Affa and he met with Mr. Lewnes and his supervisor, Mr. Dan Bosket and agreed to table the issue tonight and sit with the board and perhaps talk to some people that may have the wrong idea of what we are trying to do. We will come back in a month to see where we are. We can live in a harmonious way, if we tried.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she is a sponsor of this and did have a meeting. She stated this has nothing to do with language or Seventh Street it has much to do about Allentown. Allentown is progress and moving forward and very diverse. I feel a small gesture and very nice. We have a lot of street names here. We are not changing any names or anything. The community is large and the reason we picked Seventh Street is because it has a large population for a long time that has done business there. The is for the Latinos that are 50 percent of the community. it is nothing more than, thank you.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that she wants to see it truly happen because diversity is what makes Allentown great. We want to make it great, a lot better. I believe having diversity on Seventh Street is what makes us great. She stated that she loves the food and likes the atmosphere, but the reality is the majority like Mr. Guridy said they are Latinos. She spoke to Mr. Lewnes last night that the signs would be good and if there are any issues regarding it, we can do a survey of the different ethnicities and put a flag next to it. We really don't have anything in the city that has a Spanish name. it would say that we are happy that you guys are here and you are part of the community. They are working really hard and it would be a great gesture.

Dr. David McGuire stated the four persons on Council went because we got together regardless of how people felt about the specific item. What really turned out was a significant part of the community on Seventh Street had a different view of what Calle Siete might mean. They were articulate and rational about their presentation. The experience of others, this was not a dimension that they were made aware of. He asked how many people are here for Calle Siete and Seventh Street. If this was to go through exactly as it is now, a group of people on Seventh Street will be upset and perturbed and if we don't do it, a group will be upset and perturbed. There needs to be some more work done. We feel that this topic should be tabled for four weeks so that the people who have strong view from the Seventh Street community can get together and work it through.

Mr. Ray O'Connell thanked Dr. McGuire and Mr. McLean. He asked Mr. Holbert for a ruling on the tabling of R154 - Calle Siete Resolution.

Mr. Scott Holbert stated that the fact that it is being tabled and it is going to come up again. There is some sort of action being taken here tonight. He would recommend to continue public input. Let them speak even though it will be coming in the future they can come back, but it still should be something that should be addressed tonight.

Mr. Roger MacLean asked anyone else of the dais.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that he did have an opportunity to speak to the businesses on Seventh Street and majority of the businesses have signed a petition.

Mr. Roger MacLean asked where do we stop. If the Germans want a sign or the Italians want a sign, if the Syrians want a sign. He stated that he hopes to get invited to the next meeting as the Chair of this committee.

Mr. Peter Lewnes, 455 N. Seventh Street, thanked Council for opening up the discussions on this. As a resident of Seventh Street since 2003, he has worked tirelessly to see this community come back. We went from an almost 70 percent vacancy rate to an almost 100 percent occupied. This is a divisive issue. We have received countless calls. They are here. These are the people that have called to say we don't want this. Seventh Street rebranding this is an issue. You don't just re-brand without first coming out to the community and asking them what they want. We have polled the Hispanic community eight years ago, seven years ago, do you want us to have something - rebranding of the street and it was resoundingly no. The petition that was done, basically, I had calls from my non-Hispanic merchants who said they were yelled at, and they were

saying that their comment was well if it was a Korean initiative you would sign it. It is a divisive issue. It is not being handled correctly. He asked for Council to stop this and come up with a solution that does not rebrand an entire shopping district.

Mr. Don Ringer, 1801 Liberty Street, stated that with all due respect of all Hispanics. Mr. Guridy, this is not Chinatown at all. Seventh Street is not an utopia. Can I name my street corner after all German people, the Italian people, the Polish people, the Hungarian people, the Jewish people or everyone else that really built this town.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that the streets are already named after those people. Most of the streets are names after Germans, Italians, and the founding fathers.

Mr. Don Ringer stated no they are not.

Mr. John Rosario, 611 N. Seventh Street - B & R Enterprises, stated that he has been in Allentown for over 20 years, right on Seventh Street. He said his problem with this is that we have a lot of children, disadvantage children lacking education in Center City, on Seventh Street. They don't have the tools to get ahead in life. That is a problem. We have a revolving door of people renting apartments on Seventh and around the alleys. No home ownership. Why don't we talk about creating a low income homeownership for people to invest in the community. They can come and make sure that the streets are clean. The leadership has it wrong.

Ms. Kathleen Capela, 435 N. Eighth Street - Member of Seventh Street Development Committee, stated that almost the exact issue was put before Council eight years ago and the Seventh Street Community did not want it then and they really don't want it now. We are talking about the Seventh Street Community, the Seventh Street merchants, Hispanics and every other background. They don't really want this. If you want to spend \$400 a corner for a gesture, I think you need a better idea from people on the street, in that community.

Mr. Dennis Pearson, 942 E. Tilghman Street, stated that we on the East side community knows a little bit about branding things that most of us don't want.

Mr. Carlos Salas, 424 North Street, stated that he supports Calle Siete in Allentown.

Ms. Dorcas DeRiveria, 617 N. Seventh Street, stated that she lived there for 40 years. It is a nice thing what you want to do, but before you do that

we have to focus on trash, more police and cleaning the streets. She owns and do business and every half an hour she comes out she has trash in front of her place. She stated that the last thing she wants to do is name Seventh Street in Spanish, even though it is her own language. She feels they are going backwards, not forward.

Mr. Bill Green, 214 N. Eighth Street, stated that the Resolution is divisive and alienating regardless of anyone's background. He would like to see much more priorities on cleaning up trash. He has a trash can that is missing in front of his house. In terms of gestures, consider opening up a green space where everyone in Allentown feels we are moving forward. It should be the basis of the decision that Council should make. Does this decision move Allentown forward for everyone. This Resolution fails this test.

Mr. Julio Guridy asked Mr. Green his address.

Mr. Bill Green stated 214 N. Eighth Street. Two blocks from the arena.

Ms. Bridgette Parks, 437 N. Seventh Street, stated that English is her second language. She stated that she is of German decent and lived in Allentown for 42 years and lived on Seventh almost all her life. Her family has lived and run a business on Seventh Street since 1945. She is a committed homeowner on Seventh Street. She loves her Hispanic neighbors and go shopping at the Spanish stores. She doesn't see the sense of renaming or adding a sign Calle Siete. She gives her Spanish neighbors enough credit that they know what Seventh Street is. It doesn't need to have a Spanish name, maybe a park area.

Ms. Rebecca Torres, 432 N. Seventh Street, stated that she is a resident and business owner for over 30 years. She appreciates the sponsors good intention to promote the Latino, but for the reasons already stated, I am not in agreement with the proposed Resolution to add Calle Siete to the existing sign.

Mr. Roger MacLean stated for full disclosure, he has known Rebecca for many years.

Ms. Karen Berard, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Center - 435 N. Seventh Street, stated that she is not in support of the Resolution. It is good to keep our heritage behind us and she thinks it should stay Seventh Street. She grew up in Allentown and it is great that we have Seventh Street. When does it stop. She stated that she thinks it should stay Seventh Street.

Ms. Kathy Frey, teacher at the Neighborhood Center at 435 N. Seventh Street, stated that she is not in support of this. She has been a teacher in the Allentown School District and at the Neighborhood Center. We teach the kids to get along no matter what the culture is. The kids don't care about the street signs and what they say. It is about getting along and seeing the neighborhood and the community. They see the change that has happened on Seventh Street and the look thanks to Peter.

Mr. Juan Santos stated that for the second time he comes before Council to add Calle Siete to the name of Seventh Street. It is a commercial space where Latin and Hispanic businesses have grown. He requests that the authority of the city pass a law that recognizes Seventh Street in Spanish.

Ms. Elsa Vasquez, 620 N. Sixth Street, stated that she has one of her businesses off Seventh Street. She has been in the community since 1978. She and her children grew up here. She supports and endorses Calle Siete. It is not going to take away the identity of anybody. It will be a legacy for our children. It would be to enrich our community.

Mr. Julian Guridy, 3611 Aster Street, stated that he grew up in Allentown all of his life. He feels that Allentown is changing a lot and all the changes involves our community. He stated that recently graduating from college, ever major requires another language or to fulfill the requirements. It seems the majority of college students and his friends are including Spanish as their minor or just to learn because they see that Spanish is evolving and becoming a primary or second language.

Ms. Pat Jackson, 2215 W. Gordon Street, stated that she spent many years working in Center City doing community service. A lot of work and time have been given by people like Peter Lewnes to make Seventh Street marketable. If we are going to say that Seventh Street is the entryway to the new Allentown, then we don't want to restrict it. We want it to be inclusive, not exclusive. By renaming the street we give the impression that this is exclusively Hispanic. There is diversity here. It is not narrowed down and restricted to one group of people. She doesn't agree with changing the sign. She has a really big problem with the folks who do live there, and work there, and struggle there and volunteer their time there were not consulted about what should be done. The city can line its money up with Upside Allentown and do something to multiply its funds.

Mr. Roger MacLean stated that they heard from both sides.

Mr. Pinero, stated that he grew up in Allentown. He came here without knowing a single word of English. He struggled, learned, assimilated, and ate every kind of food no matter who made it. He played with all kids.

Color, language, and culture meant nothing. Friendship, community that is what matters to him. Two weeks ago he made a decision to move back to his hometown. He has seen a lot of changes good and bad. The issue goes deeper than this. It is more than just adding or recognizing. There are some deep issues here of feeling that their community is being overturned. Diversity is great, but diversity divides. It is a good thing that we are tabling because there are issues that need to be resolved and they are much deeper than what is being discussed here.

Mr. Roger MacLean stated that one of the positives it wasn't a divisive on ethnic or racial lines here. We have people on both sides of the fence.

Ms. Kari Holmes, 1147 E. Marks Street, stated that she supports the additional naming. All the sentiments are valid and believes in addition to being a gesture of appreciation and acknowledgement of the Latino culture, community and contributions here. I think we do recognize the renaming of the street both logistically and culturally means something to us. It is representative of our culture. There are some places here in Allentown that there were no discussion. Cultures were moved out and other cultures came in. There are things that happened by government takeover that has not seen a light of a community conversation. She thanked Council for having a conversation. Our street names, our building names, and park names do represent us and who we are historically and culturally.

Ray O'Connell motioned to table R154 and David McGuire seconded the motion.

Yes: 3 - David McGuire, Roger MacLean and Ray O'Connell

Adjourned: 7:28 PM