

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
10 East Church Street - Town Hall  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, March 17, 2020 – 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

President Waldron called the meeting to order. Present were Michael G. Colón, J. William Reynolds, and Adam R. Waldron, 3. Bryan G. Callahan, Grace Crampsie Smith, Olga Negrón, and Paige Van Wirt were absent, 4.

*Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update*

President Waldron stated obviously we are short staffed this evening with only 3 members of Council in attendance. We fail to meet the requirement for a quorum and cannot take any official action or votes this evening. The bulk of our meeting will to hear from the Administration on the efforts being taken in our City and our community in response to the coronavirus outbreak. We will try to follow our agenda as best we can but without being able to take votes that will limit us. He explained we do have the option of hearing from the public if anyone would like to make a comment. President Waldron pointed out that many folks are joining us at home on the YouTube stream which was our intention to encourage people to stay home and be able to participate and hear what is happening this evening specifically to hear from the Administration and what some of those efforts are. There is not much we can do as far as Council here other than hear from the Administration which is the real reason we are all here in this room tonight.

Mayor Donchez informed he will make a few comments and then turn it over to Kristen Wenrich, Health Director and Robert Novatnack, Emergency Management Director to give updates pertaining to the coronavirus. We have met daily for the last week and week and a half. We met on Sunday to issue a press release and YouTube video to provide information to the public as we did this morning also. Mayor Donchez thanked President Waldron and Controller George Yasso for attending the meeting this morning. He is thankful for the lines of communication between him and Members of Council and added he appreciates that. Mayor Donchez continued to say this afternoon they met with all of the supervisors for 2 hours from all the departments going over various issues with them pertaining to the coronavirus that include some changes in City policy. Members of Council should have received today a press release, a copy of the YouTube video and a copy of the COB (City of Bethlehem) memo that went out to all City employees with an addendum that is listed on the web page pertaining to various departments, what changes they are making in their own departments. We are asking the public to look at the City's website for additional information. This is a very fluid situation sometimes changing daily or hourly. We will meet every other day and daily if we have to but we will review what we have told the supervisors today and the whole staff as well. The information that was provided today was a snapshot of today, next week if we are up to 20, 25, or 30 positive cases in both Counties the policy of City Hall might be changed. Everything is on the table; we have been discussing several options. One option we discussed, because the public is not to blame for

this virus, is probably an extension for any tax payments or bill payments, etc. That is something we are considering and we will look at that and maybe make an announcement on that within the next week or week and a half. Mayor Donchez explained we are also looking at some other options pertaining to staff and also to the public. He commended all the people behind him, his department heads, we have worked hard in trying to keep the public and Council informed. He pointed out that Chief Novatnack and Ms. Wenrich have done an outstanding job with all the meetings and he will turn this over to Ms. Wenrich and then to Mr. Novatnack.

Ms. Wenrich remarked before she gets into updates it is important to note that we are really fortunate in the Lehigh Valley that we have a great emergency preparedness infrastructure. For years and years both local health departments have been meeting with both County EMA's, with the local healthcare systems, healthcare providers, the school districts, to make sure that we have plans in place and we regularly drill those plans. That has been beneficial in dealing with this outbreak situation because that communication network was already in place, plans have already been developed and it has made this horrible situation run the best that it can locally. The Bethlehem Health Bureau has been actively working with the local school district, our local colleges and universities, businesses, long term care facilities, homeless organizations and shelters and non-profit organizations since the beginning of this outbreak. Ms. Wenrich noted starting back in mid-January at that point the Health Bureau was already monitoring travelers who were coming to the United States to Bethlehem from China. We were quarantining and monitoring those individuals for symptoms over the 14 days. Then as the situation has unfolded our role has of course become more prominent. Just sharing some of the statistics, and again it is fluid and constantly changing. The Department of Health is updating their website typically twice a day with new counts for the State of Pennsylvania. Current counts were up to 96 confirmed cases in Pennsylvania as of this afternoon. We are still only at 1 confirmed case in Lehigh County and 1 confirmed case in Northampton County. Every morning we get a situational report from the Department and as of this morning the situational report had 4,392 cases in the United States and 77 deaths. There have not been any deaths yet reported in Pennsylvania. We are currently investigating and monitoring one case here in the City of Bethlehem. That individual has been interviewed, close contacts have been identified and those close contacts are currently under quarantine. As you are also probably aware, that individual was an employee of Lehigh Valley Health Network so we did launch a joint investigation with Lehigh Valley Health Network to help us identify employees and patients who that individual came in close contact with. Those individuals are quarantined and some have been recommended for testing based on risk. Ms. Wenrich continued to say there is some concern at this point about community spread. During the last few weeks as the situation has unfolded in Pennsylvania and we have seen cases, initially all the cases were tracked back to a specific exposure. So it was either travel related or they were in close contact with somebody that was positive for coronavirus. There have been now a few cases that have emerged where we cannot track back that exposure point. The Secretary of Health had a press conference today and she cautioned that at this point we are not seeing sustained community spread but that is something that may start occurring here in Pennsylvania. In light of that they are opening up mass testing facilities in Montgomery County and in the Philadelphia area. Initially when this first starting happening the CDC was the only lab that tests could go to. We were really restricted as far as who could be tested. Late January, early February they were really looking for folks that travelled to other Countries, specifically China at that point in time who had a high number of cases of coronavirus. Then about two and a half weeks ago the Bureau of Labs in Pennsylvania started doing testing. That increased the capacity; the testing guidelines were relaxed a little bit. Now we have commercial labs that have come on board and

are able to do testing. The guidelines have relaxed a little bit and we are hoping that more testing can be done and the timeframes can be shortened as well. Right now there is a 3 to 4 day time period before we get the test results back, we are hoping we can shorten that timeframe down. Ms. Wenrich noted at this point the main folks that the Department of Health was identifying for testing would be a patient, if they came in contact with a confirmed case and they became sick, a patient that resides in a congregate care setting, so someone in a long term care facility, if the patient is a healthcare worker and becomes sick or the patient is hospitalized and there are no other explanations. She stressed the guidelines are constantly changing so as a healthcare provider they may evaluate a patient who may not have any exposure but they are symptomatic and then they recommend them for testing. Ms. Wenrich explained both healthcare networks now have hotlines established. They have specific sites established within their healthcare networks because they do not want people going to the ER, or going to their healthcare provider, they are trying to control where people are going for testing. So folks need to contact the hotline and they are providing services to triage that individual to determine if they actually need to go to the testing site. Again, they just do not want people showing up there that might be showing up there unnecessarily and then getting exposed when in fact they did not have the virus to begin with. In City Hall, Chief Novatnack will speak about this in depth as far as limiting the visitors. Just from the Health Department side we are still providing some critical clinical services but we are changing everything where it has to be appointment based. We will be doing screening as well but we want to make sure if there is a TB patient that needs medications or a patient with an STD and they have contact, that person is getting medication. So we are going to be making that determination if we need to see that person immediately. In some cases for some of our clinics such as immunizations we can reschedule that person out for a few weeks. Ms. Wenrich added they are also working with some other local clinics to refer patients. So if someone wants to come in and get an STD test we will be referring those patients elsewhere. Anybody that would need to come into the Health Department for services that we determine as critical, they will be screened for travel and for symptoms as well as finding out if anybody in their home is under quarantine. That will be implemented in other areas as well if home visits need to be done or inspections. She knows that Community and Economic Development have the same system so we are consistent across the board. We have also been providing guidance to food facilities over the last few weeks on how they can reduce exposures. Already, we certainly educate them on sanitary measures, so it is nothing new for food facilities, but we are enhancing that education. When the announcement came yesterday from Governor Wolf recommending the shutdown of all restaurants aside from offering carry out and delivery service we had a communication and are constantly providing them guidance from the Department of Agriculture. Ms. Wenrich continued to say we are also working actively with the Bethlehem Area School District; they had developed a tier mitigation strategy prior to the Governor closing down all the schools on Friday. They were very concerned about making sure they can continue providing services to some of their vulnerable students. They do have 8 designated sites throughout the community to offer breakfast and lunch programs for students. Additionally, we are engaged with the non-profit sector. Yesterday we had a call with United Way and CACLV had organized a conference call. There were over 150 non-profit agencies that were part of that call. We want to focus on the needs of the vulnerable populations. They were asked to make sure that we are tracking any non-profits that are discontinuing or suspending services or if they are modifying their services that we have a better handle on that so we can see exactly where the needs are in the community. As you can imagine there is a lot of concern from the non-profit agencies, some of them are very dependent on volunteers, without volunteers they are having a difficult time providing the same level of service and concerned about funding as well. If they are not doing a program in the

schools or community they are concerned about their grant funding. There are many different conversations around the non-profit sector and trying to keep them afloat during this time and to continue to provide services to those vulnerable populations. Ms. Wenrich noted they had a call earlier today with both County Emergency Management Agencies (EMA's) and the healthcare networks. Over the weekend they had several conversations regarding their hotlines that they have set up and the fact that they are inundated with calls. People are not only calling with testing related questions but other questions related to coronavirus. The State also has a hotline number set up and she was told the other day that someone was waiting for an hour and a half, so those are concerns that we want to address with the healthcare systems to determine if they need any help from the Allentown or Bethlehem Health Departments. We do have the ability to set up a call center through our emergency preparedness program. At this point in time both healthcare networks felt like they can currently meet the demands so they have been increasing their staffing for their hotlines to be able to respond to calls from residents in the Lehigh Valley. That is something that is on the table and an offer that we put forth where if they feel they cannot meet the demand of calls we certainly want them to be focused on the screening and testing of individuals. So if we can help reduce that burden by answering other questions that people might have we will offer that service that we can set up a local call center so people can call and get their questions answered. Ms. Wenrich explained two of the areas that they are receiving a lot of questions on include essential and non-essential services. Initially when the press release came out and the information came out the list was a little vague. Since then there has been additional guidance that has been published that specifies a little bit more non-essential versus essential. She does not think only her office was getting those calls but the Mayor's office also as well as our service center, so we are providing that information on the website. Related specifically to coronavirus with testing and quarantining there have been a lot of questions, especially about quarantining. Individuals think because somebody they know and came into contact with is being tested for coronavirus that means automatically they need to go into quarantine but that is not the case. Last week when the schools were still in session we had a lot of questions, schools were sending misinformation out where people thought there was a positive in their school, again that was not the case, it was that someone got tested but then when that information was relayed the story changed. We are continuing to provide that education to the community that if you are under quarantine the Department of Health will notify you that you were in close contact with somebody and that you need to be quarantined for 14 days. Just because your spouse or someone close to you went for testing does not mean that you are automatically under quarantine, that test needs to come back positive and at that point the investigation would happen and individuals would be put under quarantine and then recommended for testing if their risk is high enough. The other question we are getting mainly from businesses is when someone can return to work. If they have someone who tests positive for coronavirus when are they actually cleared and when can they return to work. That guidance has been evolving. Initially the guidance we had received was when the person becomes asymptomatic and then they have two tests at least 24 hours apart that are negative then they can return to school or work. But we are waiting for updated guidance from the Department of Health so that may change. We will make sure that we relay that information out to the business community and schools and employers. Ms. Wenrich explained as you can imagine a lot of our job is trying to control rumors and making sure that people are getting factual information. We did create a spot on the City's website, a coronavirus page and today we modified that slightly because the information was getting fairly lengthy so we created some drop down menus. We are encouraging people to go to the Department of Health, go to the CDC and get factual information because there is a lot of information floating around right now on social media. We want to make sure we are reducing

the panic as much as possible and giving people factual information from reliable sources. At this point in Northampton County all hospitals and long term care facilities in the County do have restricted access. We have been in constant communication with long term care facilities. There have been some specific calls that the State has been holding with long term care facilities because they have a population that is very vulnerable. As of last week those long term care facilities did restrict access.

President Waldron thanked Ms. Wenrich for her efforts, it is clear that there has been a lot of time and resources put into the response here from the City and the Health Department specifically. He had the ability to sit in on the Mayor's meeting this morning at 10:30 am with all his department heads. It is a pretty comprehensive plan. Every department is considering their efforts currently and what they are going to do once the situation here in Bethlehem and in the surrounding community gets worse, and it will. President Waldron just wanted to say thank you for what has been done so far but also what is going to be asked in the coming weeks and months ahead. This will affect everyone, if not directly through them or someone they know being affected with the coronavirus but the economic impacts that it will have on our community are really unknown and will not be known for a while. President Waldron noted that is something that is in the back of our minds also, how we can help small businesses and individual families and homes that are in need today and in the upcoming weeks. Also then in the recovery effort of what the economy will look like locally and nationally, that is something we are all really concerned about. He queried as to what folks should do who are Bethlehem city residents or otherwise if they think they are sick, should they call their primary care physician, should they call the hotline numbers? What is that first step?

Ms. Wenrich informed they are recommending that people call their healthcare provider. Most healthcare providers are not seeing patients in their office but they can certainly consult with their healthcare provider if they feel comfortable talking to them. Then that provider can easily refer them on to the hotline but the hotline is where you want to go. They will let you go then move forward and get tested at one of their facilities.

President Waldron remarked that was one thing he wanted to talk about. The term screening and testing get thrown around interchangeably or incorrectly. He wanted to hear the thoughts that Ms. Wenrich has referring to the definitions of screening and testing.

Ms. Wenrich related screening is to determine if that individual is at risk, if it is necessary for them to actually take that next step to get tested. Again, we do not want everybody to show up and inundate the healthcare system, test people who do not need to be tested and who are not showing symptoms. There are a limited number of tests at this point in time. We do not want to expose people that are not sick to others that are sick.

President Waldron asked what the testing process looks like.

Ms. Wenrich remarked it depends if you are inpatient or outpatient, there are different guidelines but it is basically a swab.

President Waldron noted that Easton Hospital was putting together a drive thru testing process.

Ms. Wenrich informed that is correct.

President Waldron queried if the other hospitals plan on doing that as well.

Ms. Wenrich explained she is not sure, there are discussions but she does not think there are firm plans at this point.

President Waldron has noticed that things move quickly and what seems like prudent or wise behavior today in a week or a few days might change completely.

Ms. Wenrich stated absolutely, when she met with the school district last week we were in one place and two days later we had totally different discussions.

President Waldron mentioned the quote he heard which he thinks really resonates is "This week has been a long month." You can roll that out to say "This month has been a long year." It will just move from there because this moves so quickly and the goal posts keep moving of what the standard should be for normal practices. Clearly everyone is trying to balance some semblance of normalcy with respect to maintaining daily routine, thinking about the economic impact that they have as well as community spread potential and keeping their friends safe as well as the people around them. From his understanding you can be asymptomatic but you can be a carrier and be spreading the virus around.

Ms. Wenrich remarked that is some of the discussion is about doing mass testing and other Countries have turned to doing mass testing and South Korea is an example. Again, she knows we are not there right now with the amount of tests; we want to make sure we are testing those who are of the highest need, if we do not have enough tests to go around. That is where Montgomery County and Philadelphia it will be curious to see with the communication with their health departments as they are doing mass testing down there, just because of the number of cases they are seeing and the concern for community spread. They will most likely have the drive thru testing. That kind of speaks again going back to the drills she discussed. Every year we do a drive thru flu clinic with the Bethlehem Area School District and that is one of the reasons we do the drive thru, so we can test our capabilities. She is confident that if we need to assist with a drive thru testing site that we already have that framework laid out.

Mr. Colón thanked everybody involved with this. Obviously this is something we are all impacted with whether it is being off of work or working in a big nursing home or trying to maintain City business. When there is talk about the emergency plan, there is an old saying in emergency preparedness that says "A plan is nothing, planning is everything." It is encouraging to hear that there are these simulations and drills and the drive thru flu clinic but now we are faced with a different reality. Mr. Colón asked the turn-around time with the results of the testing. Say someone goes through a drive thru clinic as an outpatient do they get the results in 24 hours or a few days. He personally in his day job has heard different things.

Ms. Wenrich stated it depends on where it is going. The Bureau of Labs, the State lab, they are trying to prioritize individual tests that are going to the State lab. So a healthcare worker who is symptomatic, again somebody who recently travelled and who is symptomatic, because those test results are turned around in about 24 hours. If it is going to a commercial lab at this point in time it is around 3 to 4 days. We are hoping and hearing that will continue to shorten,

especially as you have more labs coming on board. There is a whole approval process for a lab to run the test.

Mr. Colón asked for the local health networks how are the emergency departments doing as of today. He would assume there is an uptick every day in the number of people that maybe are not reading the advisories to call their healthcare providers and are electing to go to the emergency department. He wondered if they are close to capacity, are they keeping up with everything.

Ms. Wenrich informed she has not heard anything as far as a surge. Today our EMS Director said that they are not seeing an increase either in the number of calls. Hopefully that messaging is getting out there. They certainly do not want the ER's being full of people that think they may have coronavirus. They are trying to push that hotline number out and make sure people are going to those designated sites.

Mr. Colón knows it is appreciated to keep getting the information out on the City's website, directing people to the CDC and things like that. There is a lot of misinformation out there on social media. There is sort of a mob mentality at some points with some of the things people are reading. He is thankful that we have information on our website and the City is a trusted source of information. We need to put as much stuff out there as we can for hopefully many eyes to see instead of getting this information of someone saying they know someone who works at the hospital and they said something and that is not good in a time like this.

Ms. Wenrich agreed that it just causes more panic and that is the last thing we want at this point.

Mr. Reynolds thanked Ms. Wenrich and added on Friday he had the chance to attend a Board of Health Meeting in the morning and every step of the way Ms. Wenrich has provided information and has been on top of things. We are certainly fortunate to have Ms. Wenrich leading this response. Mr. Reynolds commented about the short video updates that Mayor Donchez and Ms. Wenrich have done and if we can do as many of those as possible that would be valuable and important. Those are the things that get shared and people see those and he has listened to those videos the past few days about all the things we are doing and the feeling he has from seeing those is one of everything we are doing in our power. Right now a lot of people above all else are anxious because they are getting information from different sources and do not have a Ms. Wenrich to give information. We see conflicting opinions on what this means and how serious it is and through different sources of media. Mr. Reynolds thinks her voice and the voice of the Administration in everything we are doing is valuable, we should try to put out as many of those videos as we can. The good thing here is that we are doing everything we can do right now on a minute to minute and hour to hour basis. The challenge for all of us as we go forward is that a lot of the people that need this information or need our assistance are not people that will just call City Hall. That will be our short term, medium term and long term issue that we have to come together on. Mr. Reynolds just wanted to thank Ms. Wenrich for what she has done. He is sure this has probably been one of the more challenging times in her professional career but he knows that she is doing everything she can. The biggest compliment he can give is that when people hear everything the Health Bureau is doing on a community wide basis, they walk away feeling a little bit less anxious. Our challenge is getting that information out to as many people as possible.

Mr. Novatnack remarked that we will be declaring a Declaration of Disaster for the City of Bethlehem. He added that all other Cities around us are doing it this week; the Counties have already done it. There is the document to be signed by President Waldron and the Mayor when this meeting is over. What that means is we will activate our Emergency Operation Center downstairs. There will be restricted access into that location, the police know that. We met with all of Police, Fire and EMS today and also City Hall staff that there are restricted areas down there for confidentiality reasons. Also to keep the street Police and Firemen to come in there for information, we are following the guidelines for the CDC and everyone else about keeping that social spacing there from the street guys. Mr. Novatnack noted that Level IV is a normal day here a week ago; everything goes on in City Hall, no big changes in any of the departments. When you go to Level III it ramps up a little bit, we secure City Hall a little better. We will make changes on visitors coming here. Our departments have a little bit of a change. We will get more information from the 911 Centers. They will give us more information and screen calls a little better, medical calls so when our guys are in route to a call that they get more information. Just for example, there is an 85 year old patient and have respiratory problems and had them before, they are doing more digging at the call center so our guys know going there that you have a potential for a problem. What happens is we are sending in 1 paramedic. There are some rumors going around, we go to every call, we have not missed a call. We have gone to every call in the same timely manner we did a week ago, two months ago and six months ago. It is just that when we get there we evaluate the medical calls a little differently and putting less of our workers, especially the paramedic's, police officers, and firemen at risk. We are sending 1 person to scout it out and make sure everything is okay, access the patient and see what they really need and they are handling this on a case by case basis. We have not missed one call or delayed any timeframe or anything; we are not reducing any calls. We are doing the same thing we did before but just being more on top of things with the help of the 911 Center in Northampton County and our boots on the ground. Mr. Novatnack added we could increase staffing right now if we wanted to, if we need more Police and more Medical. He talked to Tom Decker, EMS Director, they do not need any more folks right now, and everything is under control. Their call volume is not up very high, it is normal right now. It could change overnight or it could change a week from now which it might. Then we will look at increasing staff and when we do our declaration that gives us the ability to do that and recoup funds down the road, whether that is 3 months from now or 6 months from now. There will be funding available through PEMA and FEMA to help us for overtime and bills. That is another reason why we want to do the declaration tonight. We will make adjustments as things may escalate or de-escalate. He filled out paperwork today for something called unmet needs. As you know if you try to get Purell or toilet paper it is tough to get it so we did request for masks for our workers and also for hand sanitizers and for face shields. That is because if this prolongs we could probably last a month and a half or two but if it would go longer and escalate we want to have that here on reserve. Mr. Novatnack stated now they are keeping supplies to an area that really needs it like Montgomery County and the government will take a lot down there if needed and if it does become our turn then we will get those resources here. He did that paperwork today with the help of the Health Department as to what the needs are and that will be addressed in case we need more supplies for the unmet needs. We are fortunate for one thing, we have been working the Incident Command System here since he was here with Fire Chief George Barkanic and we stressed how important it is. Mr. Novatnack explained with Police Chief Mark DiLuzio and Fire Chief Warren Achey, Tom Decker, and Ms. Wenrich's department we all believe that it does work. We are so fortunate in our City, he has looked at other Cities and how they perform and sometimes they have confusion as to who is in the lead and who is taking direction but that is not happening here in the City of Bethlehem. The



departments and department heads all have a role here from the Water Department with Ed Boscola's group making sure our water is safe, to everything with the street folks and the Health Department and Community and Economic Development Department, they are all on board and under the guidance of the Mayor we are all in this together. It does work the system of chain of command and knowing who is in charge of certain things and you let the people do their jobs they are trained for. Mr. Novatnack remarked he is very fortunate to work with the people that are here now. The other thing is that Police, Fire and EMS are following all their policies but also recommendations from the CDC and the Department of Health. They review these daily, we get updates from the Health Department with anything that comes new down the road because things are changing. A few days ago certain things are not the same as they are now, how things are handled. The biggest thing now is that we are not that busy down in our Bethlehem Service Center with emergency type situations but we are getting the complaint calls. He has been briefing the Mayor and Mr. Evans on this. We have gotten calls with people complaining why they Casino was not shut down or why was not something happening a Lehigh University, etc. But it has all been dealt with; it took a little bit of time in how this has been evolving. We did not rush anything, there were calm decisions made by the Administration and by our departments. Much of this will be guided by what the State will be telling us to do and the federal government. We are just trying to stay ahead of it all and it is working well, we have it under control. If calls do escalate, which they probably will we can ramp up with our medical teams and also with our public safety, which is really important. Mr. Novatnack remarked about unmet needs in the City. You think you are prepared for everything. We were for Hurricane Sandy until we lost power and things went sour. We are ready for pandemics, there are policies in place and a lot of it is under the Health Department and his department. The people that work in these departments are doing a really good job. He pointed out that Council can reach out to him and he will guide them to whoever will be handling that question. We are open door to Council anytime you need to talk. If Council wants us back here for another event or something that comes up and things change, this might be the new normal for a while. If you want us for anything else, just request it.

President Waldron remarked the question is when will be the next meeting because the standard of what is acceptable and appropriate behavior changes by the day. We are having this Council Meeting tonight under very unusual circumstances without a quorum, with no public here essentially. We have a good amount of folks watching from home and getting this good information from you which is very valuable. But we do not know when our next meeting is going to be. He does see value in keeping open lines of communication and getting this valuable information to people who need it to fill the void of misinformation that is out there right now. President Waldron wanted to touch on the consistency in messaging from closures not within the City but some of that information is very conflicting that we get from the national government to the State, to the City and different municipalities are doing much different things as far as what is closed, what is open, what is appropriate social distancing, what is extreme. He asked Mr. Novatnack to touch on that, although he did touch on that we are following the State guidelines but some of that feels a little bit different from each municipality.

Mr. Novatnack remarked it was interesting when the Governor went to the microphone and other people were talking and digesting the speech later on. He brought a hard copy with him of the list. Non-essential businesses that are strongly urged to close include recreational centers, gyms including yoga and spin facilities, hair salons, barber shops, nail salons, spas, Casinos, concert venues, theatres, sporting events, golf courses, retail facilities, including shopping malls. The reason is because that is where mass gatherings take place and where you

have the 50 people in an area. So they are trying to prevent those large crowds from getting together. On the flip side what do they want to stay open are all medical facilities because people need to talk to their doctor by phone or maybe go in for something. People are still getting sick. Police and Fire are still going to other calls. They had a fire the other day, and the police are still making arrests, there are still people in our cell blocks. Life does go on even though it is slowing down and people are not out on the street, there are still accidents and traffic lights need to get fixed. He pointed out that medical facilities, hardware stores, post offices and shipping outlets, banks, laundromats, vet clinics, pet stores, insurance, warehousing, storage, public transportation, hotels and commercial lodging, they want them to stay open. Mr. Novatnack mentioned people may say why not close the hotels because there are so many people but they are in their own room and probably getting room service and not eating in the big halls. Construction and trash collection must go on, bio-medical and healthcare, food processing, all agriculture and industrial manufacturing. So they want to keep business flowing but they just do not want large groups of people gathering because of how the virus spreads and how they are trying to get a handle on it. That is the best direction we have coming out of the State.

President Waldron pointed out that is the best direction for now but things are changing fluidly. When you look at the responses that different communities have had or different Countries, the way China responded in a much more aggressive way than the U. S. has responded or other European Countries because it is a police state and they can lock people in their houses essentially. That is not something that can and will happen here. But as far as the recommendation for closure he knows that can be really frustrating especially for the small business owners who wonder where those dollars will come from to try to keep the lights on and keep their employees paid and the trickle-down effect of all the dependents that can really be hurt by a small business closing for even a two week time period. That is really a devastating blow to a lot of businesses. President Waldron remarked the measure of a successful self-quarantine or self-social isolation here or social distancing will be that the virus does not spread. When the virus does not spread folks will say of course we overreacted and did not need to do all these things. It will be a sense where it is a self-fulfilling prophecy of saying that the government overreacted because if it does not spread then all the measures that were taken were helpful and did their job but then people will point and say it was not as bad as everyone was saying it would be. President Waldron remarked the best practice is to listen to the experts who really know what they are doing as opposed to folks who have a better opinion or seem to think they are more-well informed. If everyone gets on the same page and we get the consistent messaging and we all follow the same best practices that will put us in the best case scenario to flatten the curve, as they say. This will get bad but hopefully it will not get to the point where people we know are dying in huge numbers that is predicted because it is pretty scary times out there. President Waldron noted that he went down Main Street coming here and it is kind of like a ghost town there, but it is the heart and soul of Bethlehem and really what it is known for nationally even globally, the small businesses that are on Main Street. Right now they are all shuttered so it is a pretty scary time out there and people are not sure what is going to happen next. But he does take a little bit of comfort in knowing that the City Administration is responding appropriately. They have a plan in place for when things potentially escalate. He thanked Mr. Novatnack and Ms. Wenrich and that he appreciates the lines of communication and he thinks we will definitely be reaching back out to you for another update, maybe in a setting like this or maybe something different because we do have the technology to spread information. It is important to keep the web page updated to let people know where to get good information and where to get good knowledge on what they should do and what some of those best practices are.

Mr. Novatnack remarked one thing we talk about is the workforce here in City Hall. It seems that if this goes on longer and for the ones who have children home who have to be supervised by a parent that will be an issue down the road. If it goes into two months or so and you have a family that either a father or a mother has to stay at home with children then you are losing someone in the family that is not coming to work. Hopefully there will be flexing of the schedules and maybe staggering of the schedules.

President Waldron noted right now there is no recommendation for daycares that they must close so most of those daycares are open for younger kids, which is a big help so that people can still continue to work to the best of their ability. If you have a first or second grader they cannot be left home alone and cannot be in a daycare so someone needs to watch them. Likewise older folks are not supposed to have exposure so maybe where a grandparent could step in, that is not advised for them to get in that care giving role anymore and be more self-isolated. This is really challenging for pretty much every single family out there to try to make this work. If we are able to take the necessary steps and precautions and understand that everyone is affected in some way we will get through this together.

Mr. Reynolds thanked Mr. Novatnack for all his work here. As far as our employees are concerned, although we are seeing this everywhere that some daycares are open and some are not. If you have nurses or doctors that have children they cannot go into work. Issues like that are going to continue to arise. The majority of our employees are public safety but even the employees we have that are not public safety provide important public services. He knows we have plans for these types of things that have never been used before. He asked what worry there is the longer that this goes on. We have all seen the flattening of the curve and things like that. What we are really trying to do as a Country is not even stop how many people getting sick but just trying to spread that out so they are not getting sick all at the same time. As far as sick days or vacation days and all these things are concerned, what is the worry about our short and long term liability if for some reason we had a police officer or firefighter or a paramedic or someone in the water department that tested positive and we have to take a significant number of employees off line. This is a difficult question but he is just looking for information about different scenarios.

Mr. Novatnack informed they are looking at plans; they will have a four stage step if they keep losing employees. There is nothing happening right now, it is normal sick time that is being used. But Police, Fire and EMS they have plans that they have had since Hurricane Sandy and Snowstorm Jonas, mandatory stay at work for the Comp Center, they need to be there. Also, the water control folks have to be in there to make sure things work. So with certain jobs people know that they have to be available. When we had Hurricane Sandy we were here 10 days and there was a skeleton crew working here but Police, Fire and EMS functioned. We did have other incidents, not as long as Hurricane Sandy. The biggest problem was the power outages. This is not a power outage; this is a people problem right now, the human contact with others. If things are really bad here we would go to a skeleton crew and there could eventually be a shutdown of City Hall which we would all have to agree upon that we are looking at closing City Hall because there is no more contact with anyone and just public safety must perform. Mr. Novatnack remarked that Police, Fire and EMS could change schedules. He had done that in the past when he was Fire Chief, changing schedules for certain things that happen and they know it, that is the job that they took and they took an oath. They have to go out the door that is the critical thing. If it got that bad where things were shutting down and locking down Police, Fire and EMS would

still be responding. There is also mutual aid we have with other places if we would need to get resources. Instead of having 18 firemen and we went down to 10 firemen we could use a neighboring district. There are plans that Chief Achey has talked about for years. With the incident command system we would reach to our neighbors if we need help but hopefully we could handle it all in-house.

Mr. Reynolds remarked the question that this Country will have to face at some point, we do understand why this is necessary at this point but however long this takes, weeks, or months at some point it will be where things will have to start opening back up. Because of all of the other things, the economic damage, all these other things that will go on that we will be not able to say, everything is done and we do not have to worry anymore and everyone can leave their house and it will all go back to normal. Right now we have the public health which is number one, number two, and number three. At some point people we will hear that we have flattened the curve and there will be dominos that will fall. There will be the time where we will say we have to get back and open up more things even though we know that there will be some people that will still get the virus. Nobody knows when that will be; we are in an unprecedented situation here for everybody and have put plans into place that you never thought were going to have to be put in place. As always, we thank you for everything and all your hard work here.

Mr. Novatnack pointed out they are looking with the Administration at every option, how we would work with our employees and stagger shifts and maybe work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday one week and Tuesday and Thursday another week. We are looking at many options and if they are needed we will look at them and come before Council again.

Mayor Donchez remarked they are looking at staggered shifts, flexible scheduling and working at home. That is something we are discussing now if we really have a spike in the City and in both Counties. He added that we will keep City Hall open and are making changes to people coming into City Hall. The next step would be to close City Hall to the public. Depending on what happens we would then have flexible scheduling and staggered scheduling, these are things we are looking at.

Mr. Colón mentioned the non-essential businesses that are directed to be closing. He queried if the Communication Center is getting any calls about businesses. Mr. Colón knows of a business not here in the City who essentially refuses to close their doors in another municipality. He wondered if they are getting any calls of people saying they just drove by a business and they are open.

Mr. Novatnack stated no, we are getting calls from businesses that said they want to open no matter what and we refer them to the guidelines that are out there, that they strongly urge them to be closed. He has talked to Police Chief DiLuzio about what happens when they get the first call of someone complaining that a business is open, will we go out there and police that business and shut them down. That would be difficult to do because there is really nothing on the books that they could have on their backs when they say they are shutting someone down. It is evolving; it might be driven by the empty streets with no people walking around. You do not want to have your ten workers there at one of the restaurants and there is nobody there to eat and you are still buying food. It might be a slow close down on their own because they cannot keep the food with no one to serve. We did get a few calls from businesses but mostly them complaining that things are not closed down sooner.

Mayor Donchez reported the Governor when he spoke he made a strong recommendation of businesses to close, not mandatory.

Mr. Colón remarked it is not mandatory, we do not have an enforcement mechanism in place but he thinks again by just economics, if no one is coming into say his barbershop why have the lights on in his barbershop. He would hope that despite the loss of revenue and a million other things we talk about with shutting down small businesses that small business owners would get on board. It will be a very long time until we really see the impacts of this both at a micro and macro level on the economy. Those are conversations we will have in the weeks, months, and years ahead. He was just curious as to what kind of feedback the City was getting or if there was anyone insistent on leaving their doors open.

Mr. Novatnack stated no, and if they are they will not going to tell us, they will just do it.

Mr. Colón informed hopefully they do not and good luck to all.

President Waldron remarked we made a big point about trying to keep the City running, especially talking about public safety, Fire, Police and EMS. It was spoken about water control which affects way more than Bethlehem City residents. He is sure Mr. Boscola could tell us how many people rely on the City's water source. He is sure there are redundancy plans in place; he is asking what the plan is if 1, 2 or more of the folks up there who provide us our excellent drinking water are unable to come to work and what those plans look like.

Mr. Novatnack remarked that people are hoarding bottled water which is unusual because our system of water is the best around and it will flow, we will have water. If there is a break in the water main there are crews that will go out and fix that.

Mr. Boscola informed we recognize certainly that water and sewer infrastructure is a critical asset especially in times of a public crisis like this. People need water for drinking, food prep, washing hands and other disinfection efforts. We have business continuity plans that we are required to have just from our regulators, the PUC, DEP and so forth that foresee certain events such as loss of staff, loss of source water, power outages, and other upsets. So we do have procedures in place that allow us to continue operating in cases of emergencies like this. For the time being it is still very much business as usual, everybody is here working, no staff is affected. But long term as Mr. Novatnack has mentioned, we are looking at plans on what we will do from a staffing standpoint if for example there is a positive case at one of the plants or we start running into cases where people call in sick for various reasons. We will start to look at those contingencies.

Mr. Reynolds commented there have been a lot of things in the past few days as far as declarations from the County, City, and State. Sometimes it is one day maybe the State or Federal level they are objecting to businesses being open and the next day the message is that they strenuously object to business being open. He thinks that one thing people are confused about is what emergency declarations mean. That is just a general comment to everything. The biggest example is what is essential versus non-essential services. Since that was not made clear a whole lot of businesses did not know if they could open or not open. He noted that Ms. Wenrich mentioned the school district's mitigation tiers and he liked how Dr. Roy when he did those videos he talked about the tiers. We know what these things mean and we certainly appreciate

trying to translate that into what that means to the guy on Seventh Avenue or the woman on Maple Street because this is a time of high anxiety. When we throw words around and say now we are in this tier and this tier, when at all possible if we can just find ways to explain that it would be important. The easiest way is through those minute and a half videos. As this goes on we need to define what these different terms mean, that would be helpful. A lot of people are getting a lot of information from a lot of different places and they do not know the difference between the County, City and State. We are working hard but this would be a good thing to do going forward.

Mr. Novatnack remarked that government has to function. There is continuity of government that is the number one course that everyone has to take in his position and in Ms. Wenrich's position. We are 3 deep in every position. No matter what would happen if the Mayor would be out of commission Mr. Evans would be there and if he is out of commission it goes down the line. Mr. Novatnack stated it is the same for him, if he would be out of commission there is Chief Achey and then Craig Baer takes over as Fire Chief. On the public safety side he knows how that works. He pointed out that the department heads have cooperated well with who is deep in their positions in case they are out of business. We will function here but it does scare people when they hear that you are declaring a disaster. We are preparing for it.

Mr. Reynolds remarked we know that and the people of Bethlehem know that we have top notch public safety and the best departments around with the services they provide and how professional everybody is that is in this room. Unfortunately they are not getting that message on a federal level. A lot of people want to hear that and it might seem like something that we have talked about many times but they want to hear that we have all these plans in place because they are looking for that confidence. Mr. Reynolds knows when we walk out of these meetings and after listening to our situation and our plans, we walk out feeling good and confident because we sit through these meetings. The challenge is overcoming the perception at other levels of government that there is not that continuity. For every one time that we hear Bob Novatnack talk about something they hear somebody else in Washington talking 20 or 30 times and give different pieces of information, one day a hoax and another day it is something serious. He mentioned, unfortunately that all ends up falling down on anybody in government. Mr. Reynolds added that we have so much to be proud of as far as all of the hard work that you guys do on a day to day basis and the years leading up to this to prepare for these situations that people want to hear that and have that confidence. No matter what is going on in other places, the City of Bethlehem has their act together because we have been planning for these situations for a long time. That is a credit to your leadership and Ms. Wenrich, Mayor Donchez, Mr. Evans, Mr. Alkhal, and Mr. Boscola and others. It is a story we need to find ways to tell.

Mr. Novatnack stated he agrees and added that they are managing it and will work with outside agencies, hospitals, and the school districts. We have done this for the past month or so, we knew this was coming and it is under control but we cannot predict how it will move forward and how fast it will move, that is the unknown.

President Waldron thanked Mr. Novatnack.

Mayor Donchez pointed out if Council wants us to give a report whenever we have the next Council Meeting we certainly will and we are available any time.

President Waldron believes that should be the standard moving forward, even if we have a meeting like this that is for not only the few members of Council that are here but the folks who are watching on line. We have the ability to share this link for this video with other people who find it helpful because this is really good information we have heard tonight. He added that if you need anything from Council as far as budget transfers upcoming or a resolution that we are here to work with you on that.

2. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 pm.

ATTEST:

Robert G. Vidoni, Esq.  
City Clerk