

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, April 7, 2026 - 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by President Rachel Leon. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Collen Laird, and Ms. Leon, 5; Absent were Justin Amann and Jo C. Daniels, 2.

CITATION HONORING: Thomas Brauchle - WSR, Waste Water Treatment Plant

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 17, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. PUBLIC COMMENT (on any subject not being voted on this evening - 5 Minute Time Limit)

Brandon Horlick

Mr. Horlick was disturbed to see the amount of litter in the areas of the creek, canal, and the Lehigh River. He encouraged clean-up and placement of sufficient trash receptacles for disposal.

George Andrews

Mr. Andrews said his Bethlehem neighbors continue to smell foul odors from Spray-Tek, Inc. He has called the Environmental Protection Agency but strong odors have persisted for four years. Neighbors are unable to go outside or open windows when this occurs.

Isabelle Tuosto

Ms. Tuosto supported Mr. Holick. She said the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been responsive and has fined Spray-Tek. She added that Spray-Tek was "kicked out" of a previous location outside of the City because of odors. She suggested that Bethlehem implement an air quality board that might have additional powers to those of DEP.

Harry Faber

Mr. Faber noted the hypocrisy of U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio commenting that Iran should have used the billions of dollars it spent supporting terrorists by instead helping the

people of Iran while the United States outspends all other nations on weapons at the expense of underfunding Medicaid, Medicare, daycare, and other programs.

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola lamented that a book that he has written was rejected for circulation by the Bethlehem Area Public Library.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics said the Bethlehem Authority should be compared to the water authorities of Easton and Allentown. In Bethlehem, bills are sent to customers by the City water department and payments are made directly to the City government. In Easton and Allentown, payments are made directly to the authority. The procedure in Bethlehem can allow for abuse, and funds can be directly deposited into the General Fund instead of the Water Fund in order to enhance the City's financial picture. Additionally, the Bethlehem Authority is not an independent agency and must submit rate increase proposals to the state Public Utility Commission at great cost. This could be avoided if it were an independent agency, such as Easton and Allentown. Mr. Antalics urged City Council to revisit the original 1938 Pennsylvania State Law of Incorporation to redefine this as an independent authority.

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer urged the City to review its parking signs around City Hall and in the parking garage to ensure clarity and accuracy. The Police Department entrance also should be better marked.

Brian Nicas

Mr. Nicas noted tonight's visit by Scout Troop 352 who are learning about democracy. He thanked Council for insights offered before this meeting and the opportunity to see how democracy works.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT (on ordinances and resolutions to be voted on by Council this evening – 5 Minute Time Limit).

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics suggested that Council initiate a study to determine if it would be advantageous for the Bethlehem Authority to become an independent authority.

4. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Members of Council
- B. Tabled Items
- C. Unfinished Business

5. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Colón

Mr. Colón noted rising gas prices brought about by the conflict with Iran and asked how this is impacting the City budget.

Business Administrator Eric Evans said it is too soon to tell. Because of the volume that the City buys, it often takes several months for a price impact to be noticed.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan asked the department heads to address the publicly raised issues of litter along the waterways and odors apparently coming from Spray-Tek.

Public Works Director Michael Alkhal said periodic cleanups have been done along the canal. A contractor was hired two years ago, and volunteer groups have cleaned the area. Garbage cans are provided along the trail, but he acknowledged that it is difficult to keep up with the litter problem.

Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins was aware of resident complaints about Spray-Tek. DEP controls air quality, and the City has consulted with the agency in the past. Permits exist and DEP is responsible for enforcement for any noncompliance. The City does not have authority over that. However, a City staffer could check with DEP on the status of permits, any remedies being pursued by DEP, and reiterate the ongoing resident concerns. She added that residents also could express their concerns to state-level representatives to enlist their help.

Mr. Callahan said the Spray-Tek odors have been present for four years. He encouraged follow-up to not let this issue die until resolution.

Mr. Callahan also asked about regulations associated with food trucks operating on Lehigh University property. South Side businesses have complained that these trucks are taking away business from them. He asked if these trucks are allowed to operate.

Ms. Collins said food trucks are permitted on an annual basis for health and fire standards. Otherwise, existing ordinances do not regulate much other than during festivals. In general, food trucks may be located on private property. She agreed to look into the specifics of Lehigh's situation and what is allowed.

Ms. Laird

Ms. Laird would appreciate future updates on odors in West Bethlehem and was curious what other enforcement options exist. She wondered whether there are any permits the City issues to Spray-Tek that might give the City enforcement options.

Ms. Kwiatek

Ms. Kwiatek recalled that West Bethlehem neighbors reported odors four years ago. She had assumed that no news was good news when no one has reported problems more recently but that apparently was not correct. She asked neighbors to keep Council informed. Ms. Kwiatek also

believed there is a public comment period when air quality permits come up for renewal before DEP, and she encouraged residents to express concerns to State Representatives Steve Samuelson and Jeanne McNeill.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – The Wicked Botanist – LV Spring Wicked Plant Festival*

Solicitor Spirk recommended a Use Permit Agreement with The Wicked Botanist to hold the 2026 Lehigh Valley Spring Wicked Plant Festival on April 26. – Item 10 A.

B. *Director of Health – 2026 24 Accessibility Audit – Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living*

Director Wenrich recommended an Agreement for \$3,900 for the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living to conduct a site survey of City-owned public spaces to assess handicap accessibility. – Item 10 B.

C. *Director of Public Works – Amend 2026 Liquid Fuels Budget*

Director Alkhal recommended an Ordinance to amend the Liquid Fuels Fund Budget from \$2,374,220 to \$2,210,833. The action was necessary to reconcile the account with the receipt of the Liquid Fuels allotment and other factors including higher than expected snow removal costs resulting from a harsh winter. – Item 9 A.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

President Leon said she asked Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward following the last Council meeting for guidance on acceptable free speech. She wanted clarification as to when public comments cross a line from free speech to hate speech or other unacceptable categories. She asked that this guidance be sent to Council for all to have a better understanding.

Mr. Callahan said he is a strong supporter of free speech but believes it should additionally be considered if a person repeats the comments to antagonize.

B. *Mayor*

None.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

Mr. Colón made a motion, seconded by Mr. Callahan, to group agenda Items 8 A through 8 E. AYE: Kwiatek, Laird, Callahan, Colón, Leon, 5. The Motion passed.

8 A. *Bill No. 13-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Sewer Capital Fund*

Sponsors: Leon, Laird. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE 2026 SEWER CAPITAL BUDGET.

8 B. *Bill No. 14-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Water Capital Fund*

Sponsors: Leon, Laird. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE WATER CAPITAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026.

8 C. *Bill No. 15-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Water Fund Budget*

Sponsors: Leon, Laird. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE WATER FUND BUDGET FOR 2026.

8 D. *Bill No. 16-2026 – Budget Adjustments – OSFC Grant – Fire – General Fund*

Sponsors: Leon, Laird. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026.

8 E. *Bill No. 17-2026 – Budget Adjustments – EMS 2025 OSFC Grant – Fire – General Fund*

Sponsors: Leon, Laird. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026.

AYE: Kwiatek, Laird, Callahan, Colón, Leon, 5. Bill Nos. 13-2026 through 17-2026, now known as Ordinance Nos. 2026-13 through 2026-17 respectively, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

9 A. *Bill No. 18-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Liquid Fuels Fund*

Sponsors: Leon, Colón. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE LIQUID FUELS FUND BUDGET FOR 2026.

AYE: Kwiatek, Laird, Callahan, Colón, Leon, 5. Bill No. 18-2026, passed on First Reading.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Use Permit Resolution – The Wicked Botanist – LV Spring Wicked Plant Festival*

Sponsors: Leon, Colón; Agreement with The Wicked Botanist to execute a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Lehigh Valley Spring Wicked Plant Festival. AYE: Kwiatek, Laird, Callahan, Colón, Leon, 5. Resolution 2026-062 passed.

B. *Approve Resolution – 2026 24 Accessibility Audit – Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living*

Sponsors: Leon, Colón; Agreement with the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living to conduct a site assessment of handicap accessibility for specified City-owned public spaces. AYE: Kwiatek, Laird, Callahan, Colón, Leon, 5. Resolution 2026-063 passed.

C. *Approve Resolution – Community and Economic Development – DCED Records Destruction*

Sponsors: Leon, Colón; Approval for the Department of Community and Economic Development to destroy specified public documents meeting the Municipal Records Retention Act requirements. AYE: Kwiatek, Laird, Callahan, Colón, Leon, 5. Resolution 2026-064 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 8:13 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk