

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, June 17, 2025 - 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by President Michael G. Colón. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Grace Crampsie Smith, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Rachel Leon, Kiera Wilhelm, and Michael G. Colón, 6. Absent was Colleen Laird, 1.

Ms. Wilhelm noted the large number in the audience and made a motion, seconded by Ms. Kwiatek, to move Public Comment for non-agenda items to the end of the meeting. Her intention was to focus on business requiring votes and then hear Public Comment.

Mr. Colón said he would support this action. He explained that Council occasionally votes to approve moving Public Comment to the end of a meeting so that it can be sure to accomplish business requiring Councilmanic action.

Ms. Crampsie Smith said she sees the benefit of this action tonight but she proposed modifying Public Comment last year and members of Council pushed back, reasoning that it limited free speech. She did not see a difference in the circumstances.

Mr. Colón further explained that moving Public Comment is done on an "as-needed" basis. He supported the action because he anticipated a heavy focus on last week's raid in Bethlehem by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at Five 10 Flats.

Ms. Wilhelm said this was in the interest of making sure that all will be heard. There have been instances where items on the agenda have been rushed because the hour became late resulting from earlier lengthy Public Comment sessions.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, and Mr. Colón, 5; NAY: Ms. Crampsie Smith, 1. The Motion passed.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 3, 2025

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Moved to the end of the meeting by earlier vote.

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

Supports Sand Island Enhancements

Resident Doug Roysdon spoke in favor of receiving a \$30,000 grant to beautify Sand Island Park. This facility offers a wide array of activities for fishermen, historians, musicians, bikers, and walkers. He recommended keeping all of these users in mind when enhancing the park.

Support for New Fire Chief

Resident Kelly Berfield fully supported tonight's appointment of Matthew Griffin as Fire Chief. She and her family were fire victims on March 9. In the aftermath she spoke with Capt. Griffin several times who offered "a calm presence and quiet professionalism." She believes he will provide a blend of strategic leadership, operational command, public safety knowledge and human compassion.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Colón

Mr. Colón was certain that many had questions related to the ICE raid, so he asked Mayor Reynolds and the Police Department to offer updates.

Mayor Reynolds said he received a call a little before 8 a.m. on June 11 from someone on the South Side telling him about the raid. He next told the Deputy Police Chief, who was unaware of the raid. Deputy Chief Scott Meixell learned that a "courtesy text" was received a few minutes earlier basically saying that federal authorities were in Bethlehem. Their activities or purpose were not detailed. They were gone by 8:15 or 8:30. Bethlehem police did not receive answers, such as who was detained, why were they detained, or whether warrants were involved. The Mayor said a Morning Call reporter told him that 17 people were detained. This information was received from ICE but was previously unshared with the City. A follow-up was attempted a day later by Chief Michelle Kott but details still were not provided. The only City police involvement came, as is practice, because an ambulance was called to the location for a medical emergency. City police did not participate in the detention. On Friday, the Police Department issued a release pertaining to related frequently asked questions. This information included jurisdictional rights and responsibilities in such instances. He emphasized that the federal government has a lot of power when it comes to immigration and is not required to share information with local police. Due process questions are legitimate but are outside of the scope of City police.

Ms. Kwiatek

Ms. Kwiatek said there was a rumor concerning the medical incident. She asked whether there was more information.

Captain Nicholas Lechman said it was a medical emergency rather than injuries sustained.

Ms. Leon

Ms. Leon asked Captain Lechman whether there are any existing Memorandums of Understanding with DHS or ICE. He said no. Ms. Leon further asked what can the City do to ensure that officers making raids are legitimate.

Captain Lechman said the Department has policies for instances in which outside state, local or federal agencies operate in the City. It is outlined which type of activities City police will or will not get involved with. Anyone with concerns can contact City police who will come out and verify the legitimacy.

Mayor Reynolds made clear that the City provides services to those asking for help without asking about their background. If they are a crime victim, they are entitled to assistance.

Ms. Crampsie Smith

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked whether the City has any rights for DHS or ICE to notify them of upcoming raids and report on results.

Captain Lechman said no to both as it relates to federal authorities. The state and local level is different. The Captain added that BPD also does not get involved in federal immigration enforcement.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan asked whether it is known who tipped off ICE as to the suspected immigration status of the Five 10 Flats work crew.

Mayor Reynolds said the City does not know. He surmised that federal agents look for potential illegal immigrants in certain industries where there may be concentrations of these workers such as the meat packing industry and construction.

Ms. Leon

Mr. Leon asked who should be called if Council and the Mayor are powerless in trying to get the 17 workers returned to their families.

Mayor Reynolds said the Executive Branch has talked about quotas and removing a certain amount of immigrants. The Legislative Branch is not pushing back on this. Some court

cases have had mixed results as to upholding the Constitution. He added that tens of millions of people in this country believe these raids are good. Until a better culture is realized and political pressure is put on the Executive Branch to change, this behavior will continue.

Mr. Callahan agreed and said the only way that substantial change will come is for voters to reverse the control of the House and Senate to be able to push back against President Trump's policies. He believes that those in power are afraid of losing it to immigrants. Mr. Callahan added that the southern border states should have an entry point like Ellis Island was to vet immigrants. That being said, there is nothing that anyone in Bethlehem can do about current circumstances.

Mr. Colón

Mr. Colón asked about the tone and cooperation of protesters in the raid's aftermath.

Mayor Reynolds said the City appreciated proper notification of events and orderly activities. This is not an "us against them." The City just looks to maintain peaceful protests.

Ms. Crampsie Smith

Ms. Crampsie Smith summarized some ideas of what can be done. She agreed with Mayor Reynolds that the City can help fund some of the nonprofit agencies that assist the community including immigrants. She also urged people not to give into bullies by giving them what they want by resorting to violence. Individually, we can help support legal assistance such as the ACLU and Human Rights Campaign. The only help may come from the courts. She also urged contacting our Congressmen and Senators.

An audience member asked whether this would be a voting item that Council is discussing or is this the same subject that was moved to the end of the meeting

President Colón explained that this discussion comes under New Business on the agenda, so Council has continued to move through the agenda items. He said the public may comment on this subject under Public Comment, which was moved to the end of the agenda.

Ms. Crampsie Smith

Ms. Crampsie Smith had a new topic under New Business. She asked about emails received this week about some resident concerns about a proposed development at 312 Hanover Street. She asked for information from the City. There is particular concern about a 12-foot-wide alley, large trees that would have to be cut down, runoff concerns, and an area where greenspace has been lost to other development.

Ms. Collins reported that the developer came to the City about a year ago with a previous plan that has since been scrapped. A new proposal has been submitted to the Planning Commission and has been reviewed by City departments. The City Zoning Officer has determined this to be a townhouse project rather than a multi-family project. This determination brings about certain dimensional requirements, which the applicant will

challenge before the Zoning Hearing Board next week. An assistant City solicitor will attend the hearing to defend the Zoning Officer's interpretation.

Ms. Crampsie Smith said that neighbors are particularly concerned about the narrow alley.

Ms. Collins said that is a fire code issue. That would not be a part of the zoning hearing. However, should the plan make it beyond the zoning hearing stage, fire codes and other considerations would be made if the plan gets a full review in the approval process.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *Director of Water and Sewer Resources – 2025 25 East Garrison Water Main Replacement – Joao & Bradley Construction Co., Inc.*

The Clerk read a May 30, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Director of Water and Sewer Resources Edward Boscola. The memorandum recommends an agreement with Joao & Bradley Construction Co., Inc. of Bethlehem to provide materials and labor to replace 800 feet of water main on East Garrison Street between High and Linden Streets. The cost is \$377,185, and the work is to be completed within 180 days of the Notice to Proceed. There are no renewals. Six bids were received, and the recommended awardee was found to be the lowest responsible bidder.

President Colón stated that Resolution 10 A is on the agenda.

B. *Director of Community and Economic Development – 2025 30 BEDCO Activities – BEDCO*

The Clerk read a June 3, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins. The memorandum recommends an agreement with BEDCO to carry out the programs and/or targeted activities of BEDCO including: administration, programs and activities, waive right-of-way fees and compensation for other projects as assigned in connection with the execution of City-sponsored events on an "as-needed" basis. The cost in not to exceed \$15,000. The contract runs through December 31, 2025, and there are no renewals.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 B is on the agenda.

C. *DCED Business Manager – Contract 2025 31 Bethlehem Chamber Marketing Activities – Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce*

The Clerk read a June 5, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from DCED Business Manager Tiffany Wismer. The memorandum recommends an agreement with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce to perform marketing and public relations services through its management and operation of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce. The cost in not to exceed \$80,000. The contract runs through December 31, 2025.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 C is on the agenda.

D. City Solicitor – ArtsQuest – Musikfest 2025-2030

The Clerk read a June 6, 2025 memorandum from Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. with an attached Use Permit Agreement and a Resolution. The Permittee is ArtsQuest and the event is Musikfest for years 2025 through 2030. Attachments set forth festival dates, hours and duration, and specified locations including festival sites, streets, Handwerkplatz and Liederplatz.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 D is on the agenda.

E. Director of Public Works – Contract 2025 32 Design Support Services – Hanover Engineering

The Clerk read a June 10, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Public Works Director Michael Alkhal. Mr. Alkhal seeks authorization to execute an agreement with Hanover Engineering Associates, Inc. of Bethlehem to provide on-call design support services for in-house stormwater design projects performed by City staff. The cost is up to \$25,000, and the contract will run through December 31, 2026. There are no renewals. Four proposals were received. Hanover Engineering was deemed the best and most qualified bidder while offering the lowest hourly rate.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 E is on the agenda.

F. Councilwoman, Grace Crampsie Smith – Memo – House Bill 1150 – Increase Minimum Wage

The Clerk read a June 11 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Council Member Grace Crampsie Smith. Ms. Crampsie Smith recommends that Council pass a Resolution supporting House Bill 1150 to increase the hourly minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15.00. She notes that Pennsylvania's minimum wage has not been raised since 2009 and that cities including Lancaster and Reading have passed similar Resolutions.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 F is on the agenda.

G. Grants Administrator for Community and Economic Development – Memo – Grant – People, Parks and Community Foundation

The Clerk read a June 11, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Lori Gilio, Grants Administrator for Community and Economic Development. Ms. Gilio seeks support to apply for a Recreational and Educational Development grant for \$30,000 through the People, Parks and Community Foundation. If awarded, the grant would be used for the beautification of Sand Island Park.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 G is on the agenda.

H. Housing and Community Development Administrator – DCED Memo – CDBG-HOME Hearing Request

The Clerk read a June 11, 2025 memorandum from Robert Vidoni, Housing and Community Development Administrator, requesting that a Public Hearing be set for July 1, 2025. The Hearing will review funding recommendations to Council of \$1,418,306 in

Community Development Block Grant funds and \$417,183.96 in HOME Investment Partnership Program allocations for 2025. The memo anticipates passage of a resolution by Council at its July 15 meeting.

President Colón stated that he would accept a motion and a second to schedule a Public Hearing for July 1, 2025 to consider the 2025 Program Year CDBG/HOME allocations. Ms. Leon made a motion, seconded by Ms. Wilhelm, to do so.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. President Colón announced that the Public Hearing is scheduled for July 1, 2025.

I. Director of Public Works – Trailer Mounted Leaf Collector – PA DEP Grant – Budget Adjustment

The Clerk read a May 29, 2025 memorandum with a proposed Ordinance from Public Works Director Michael Alkhal recommending an addition of funds to the Non-Utility Fund budget. The adjustment reflects the second of two purchases being funded by a Pennsylvania DEP 902 Grant. This second adjustment will go toward the purchase of a trailer-mounted leaf loader. The City's share to receive this grant is \$13,940. For revenue, Account # 006A-30414, DEP Grant-Recycling, will increase from \$0 to \$125,460. For expenses, Account # 69000-66017, Library Extension Column, will decrease from \$150,000 to \$136,060; Account # 69000-662053, Leaf Collector-Public Works, will receive the \$13,940 and will increase from \$0 to \$13,940; and Account # 69999-662053, Leaf Collector-Public Works, will increase from \$0 to \$125,460. The adjustment will increase the Non-Utility Fund budget from \$27,566,381 to \$27,691,841.

President Colón stated that Ordinance 9 A is on the agenda.

J. Director of Public Works – Electrical Street Lights Repair/Replacement – Budget Adjustment

The Clerk read a May 29, 2025 memorandum with a proposed Ordinance from Public Works Director Michael Alkhal recommending a budget adjustment to the General Fund. The adjustment reflects the Bethlehem Parking Authority's funding of \$140,000 for the replacement of fifty-one light poles. For revenue, Account # 001A-30713, Bethlehem Parking Authority, will increase from \$300,000 to \$440,000. For expenses, Account # 0505-42041B, Street Light Repair/Replacement, will increase from \$211,500 to \$351,500. The adjustment will increase the General Fund budget from \$113,239,162 to \$113,379,162.

President Colón stated that Ordinance 9 B is on the agenda.

7. REPORTS

A. President of Council

President Colón reported that a Police Pension Board Appeal Hearing is tentatively scheduled for 6 PM on June 24 in Town Hall. Some details must still be arranged. If postponement is necessary, notice will be given on the City's website.

B. Mayor

7B1. *Administrative Order – Matthew J. Griffin – Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator*

Mayor Reynold noted that Fire Chief Michael Reich will be retiring. He complimented him for over two decades of service to the Department, the last year as Chief.

Mayor Reynolds appointed Matthew J. Griffin to the positions of Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator. The appointment is effective as of July 4, 2025. Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution 2025-103 to confirm the appointment.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

7B2. *Administrative Order – Isis M. Irizarry Negrón – Human Relations Commission*

Mayor Reynolds appointed Isis M. Irizarry Negrón to the Human Relations Commission. The appointment through March of 2028. Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution 2025-104 to confirm the appointment.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

Mayor Reynolds also reported the June 6 Pride flag-raising ceremony. He also announced that last week the City was awarded a \$1.4 million grant for a partnership with the Lehigh Valley Conference of Churches to build the Valley's first non-congregate homeless shelter. This will provide 11 family units on Packer Avenue. This will be coupled with HOME ARP dollars to be used toward the project. He especially credited Ms. Collins and Deputy Director of Community Development Sara Satullo for acquiring this competitive grant, citing that it was data-driven and shovel-ready. The target opening date is in 2027.

C. Council – Chairpersons' Reports

7C1. *Ms. Kwiatek, Chair – Community Development Committee (F.A.I.R. Hearing)*

Ms. Kwiatek reported that the Community Development Committee held its annual Financial Accountability Incentive Reporting program hearing at 6 PM this evening in Town Hall. This is required under Article 349 and reviews economic development incentive reports submitted by the Administration.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

None.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

- 9A. *Bill No. 31-2025 – Trailer Mounted Leaf Collector – PA DEP Grant – Budget Adjustment – Non-Utility Capital Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 31-2025 – Trailer Mounted Leaf Collector – PA DEP Grant Budget Adjustment – Non-Utility Capital Fund, sponsored by Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm, and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA,
AMENDING THE 2025 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 31-2025 passed on First Reading.

- 9B. *Bill No. 32-2025 – Electrical Street Lights Repair/Replacement – Budget Adjustment – General Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 32-2025 – Electrical Street Lights Repair/Replacement – General Fund, sponsored by Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm, and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA,
AMENDING THE GENERAL FUND FOR 2025

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 32-2025 passed on First Reading.

10. RESOLUTIONS

- A. *Approve Resolution – 2025 25 East Garrison Water Main Replacement – Joao & Bradley Construction Co., Inc.*

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-105 that authorized to execute an Agreement with Joao & Bradley Construction Co., Inc. to provide materials and labor to replace a section of water main along East Garrison Street between High and Linden Streets.

Ms. Kwiatek asked Mr. Boscola about the timing of this project. She noted that neighbors are dealing with inconveniences associated with construction at Friendship Park. She wondered about the coordination of the park and water main projects.

Mr. Boscola said it was intentional to have the inconvenience all at once rather than on separate occasions.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

B. Approve Resolution – 2025 30 BEDCO Activities – BEDCO

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-106 that authorized to execute an Agreement with BEDCO to carry out programs and activities, as assigned, in connection with execution of City-sponsored events.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

C. Approve Resolution – Contract 2025 31 Bethlehem Chamber Marketing Activities – Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-107 that authorized to execute an Agreement with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce to provide marketing and public relations service to the City through its management and operation of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Callahan asked whether all money associated with this contract would be used toward Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce business rather than the broader activities of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Collins said this money would be used just for City business. A similar contract has existed between the two for about 20 years. Activities are invoiced.

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked whether the \$80,000 has been budgeted or whether this is in addition to what was budgeted.

Ms. Collins said this was the budgeted amount. This action by Council just approves the annual anticipated contract.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Motion passed.

D. Approve Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – Musikfest 2025 - 2030

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-108 that authorized to execute a Use Permit Agreement with ArtsQuest for Musikfest 2025 through 2030.

Ms. Wilhelm said she would be recusing herself from this vote because she will be a performer at Musikfest and would stand to profit from the decision. (A signed Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form has been attached to the original set of minutes.)

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 5; ABSTENTION: Mr. Wilhelm, 1. The Resolution passed.

E. Approve Resolution – Contract 2025 32 Design Support Services – Hanover Engineering

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-109 that authorized to execute an Agreement with Hanover Engineering Associates, Inc. to provide on-call design support services for in-house stormwater design projects.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

F. Approve Resolution – House Bill 1150 – Increase Minimum Wage

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-110 that authorized that the Members of the City Council of the City of Bethlehem affirm the principle that increasing the minimum wage in Pennsylvania is imperative and support the passage of legislation by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Legislators and Governor to increase the minimum wage immediately; and that the City Council of the City of Bethlehem now calls on the Pennsylvania Legislature to approve House Bill 1150, as proposed by Representative Roni Green, to raise the hourly minimum wage in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to \$15.

Ms. Crampsie Smith said that since proposing her Resolution, House Bill 1150 has passed through the House and is at the Senate level. At \$7.25 per hour, the monthly salary of someone would be \$1,160, which she said is not nearly enough to afford housing in the City let alone the added cost of utilities, food, etc. Ms. Crampsie Smith said a compromise was reached in the House in an effort to get a Senate majority and passage. The minimum wage will depend on the county of residency. The new minimum wage would be \$15 an hour in 20 of the counties. Rates will vary at \$10, \$11, and \$12 in the remaining counties. An annual cost of living adjustment will be calculated using the Consumer Price Index. The rate would be \$11 for Northampton County. If approved tonight, City Council's Resolution of support would be sent for Senate consideration.

Ms. Wilhelm believed that raising the minimum wage in Pennsylvania is long overdue.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

G. Approve Resolution – Grant – People, Parks and Community Foundation

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-111 that authorized and directed to execute all application forms necessary to apply for a People, Parks and Community Foundation grant through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for the beautification of Sand Island Park and that the Mayor is authorized to execute such other agreements and documents as are deemed to be necessary and/or related thereto.

Ms. Wilhelm agreed with the sentiments of Mr. Roysdon. Sand Island serves so many. It is wonderful as it is but could be so much more. This grant would add to what exists.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

H. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 522 Center Street

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm sponsored Resolution No. 2025-112 that authorized to paint the shutters, door, flower boxes, and all wood trim.

Voting AYE: Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Moved to the end of the agenda by vote.

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

Put it in Writing

Resident Lily Phlegor said he attended a Council meeting in February. He referred to a statement released by Mayor Reynolds at that time which essentially said the City already makes Bethlehem a safer place for immigrants, so it was not necessary to codify anything at that time. Mr. Phlegor now disagrees with that assertion after the ICE raid on Wednesday. Bethlehem needs words in writing to protect our people.

Wants Welcoming City Ordinance

Resident Shay Sabo asked why Council is declining to vote on providing a Welcoming City Ordinance to protect our undocumented residents. If members believe this would put a target on this City or increase the presence of federal agents, Wednesday's raid means these actions are happening anyway. The rationale that enacting Welcoming City legislation could lead to cuts in federal funding now seem unnecessary since cutbacks have been proposed anyway.

Backyard Chickens

Resident Denise Cano was uncertain whether an Ordinance proposed in 2022 was enacted allowing backyard chickens. She said some other municipalities allow this and she would encourage the practice.

President Colón said that Council considered an Ordinance a few years ago but it did not pass. He said he could further discuss this matter with her at a later time.

New Military Parade

Resident Arthur Curatola spoke against Wednesday's ICE raid in Bethlehem. He said there should be no borders. Mr. Curatola also proposed organizing a parade to honor veterans that would outdo the June 14 Flag Day procession held in Washington, D.C. He believed this could be done at a fraction of the cost and that money raised should be directed to assist homeless veterans.

Parks, Other Concerns

Resident Jo Daniels addressed several areas of concern. She said sewer rats in the area of the Elks Lodge on Brodhead Avenue have been reported to the City on at least three occasions. She asked who else to contact. She next questioned the prioritization of upgrading parks, noting the Mayor's 40-in-10 initiative, which seeks to prioritize City park upgrades. According to the 2020 Census, 26.8 percent of the City's population resides on the South Side. Yet, Yosko Park is the only South Side park with a pool and it is the smallest pool at that. Ms. Daniels reported a hazardous road leading to some pavilions in South Mountain Park. She also said that the park that serves as the home field for the Saints football team experiences flooding.

Affirm 4th and 14th Amendments

Resident Sebastian Zawierucha expressed frustration regarding the City's stance on immigration. Generally speaking, City officials asked for the public's trust in handling the situation. Now that an ICE raid has occurred, he said the City did little. Mr. Zawierucha said several City officials have asked, "What can we do?" He offered a draft Resolution for Council members to sign that declares a wiliness to protect the rights guaranteed under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments as they relate to the people's rights to verify legal authority and received due process. The Resolution further asserts that no City employees, police and otherwise, will obstruct a person exercising their rights. Signing this Resolution would reaffirm Council members' oaths of office, he asserted.

No Answers Unacceptable

Resident Michele Downing said it was unacceptable how unprepared the Administration and Police Department were for tonight's meeting. Providing no answers is unacceptable. Yet, she sees officials across the country standing up to ICE and taking similar actions. Avoidance is not the answer. Wednesday's ICE raid is evidence that ICE will come to Bethlehem, and the City must be better prepared.

Welcoming City Legislation Again Encouraged

Easton resident Dominic Trabosci was glad to hear that City police did not assist in the raid and that the Mayor offered a statement in solidarity of immigrants. But these actions are not enough. The City's hypocrisy begins at Council, which has failed to introduce legislation to protect the most vulnerable population. He is on record in opposition of the Mayor and Police Chief's resistance to supporting enacting Welcoming City legislation. The moral stance should be supported with policy. He encouraged Council to consult with the ACLU and similar organizations to enact Welcoming City legislation.

Inaction Criticized

Resident Harry Faber said Bethlehem police may not have participated in the raid but they condoned and allowed these actions. He called this a lack of accountability. He chastised Council, the Mayor, and police for inaction to protect residents, specifically the poor.

Offer Real Safety

Resident Joel Atkinson, a member of the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, expressed outrage that the federal government has violated and invaded our community. This was not immigration enforcement but a raid. This was an act of political fear and terror meant to frighten and destabilize working class immigrant communities. It is our moral, political and class responsibility to stand against it. Marches in opposition on Thursday made clear the community's outrage. He called on City officials to offer real safety, which he defined as condemning this raid, legally enshrining non-cooperation policies, supporting affected workers, and building the capacity to resist and disrupt ICE. He predicted that immigration is the target this time, but the federal government is testing the ability of local government and will continue these raids based on other issues. Mr. Atkinson urged Bethlehem to get creative with laws to fight back.

Disagrees with Moving Public Comment

Resident Jack Shuberer said vague promises of trust offered by City officials are not good enough. He also called it disgusting for Council to move this portion of Public Comment to the end of this meeting and alleged that this was an effort to silence those who wanted to speak by indirectly encouraging them to leave because of the anticipated late hour. He was among several speakers who used one minute of his time for silence to honor the 17 workers arrested in the raid.

A Time of Fear

Non-resident Saad Chaudry said that, as a child of immigrants, this is a scary time. He does not believe that there is nothing that City officials can do to protect the people of Bethlehem. He called on Council to take a pro-active approach.

Work Together for a Solution

The Rev. Maryann Sturges is heartbroken by the raid. The belief stated tonight that the City cannot do anything about such raids is tempting to believe but she believes differently. She encouraged residents and City officials to use their imaginations to come up with a solution.

Platitudes Inadequate

Non-resident Gwen Dietrich said all she has heard tonight is platitudes. She said the public appeal to Council in February was a "massive opportunity" to pass a Welcoming City Ordinance to protect people but Council chose not to. She said this choice to remain inactive has led to the consequences of last week. Despite assurances from the Mayor and Police Chief Michelle Kott that policies were strong, the raid occurred anyway. She urged Council to reconsider its stance to better protect people.

Fear-mongering to Blame

Sharon Finnegan of Allentown said she attended that city's Council meeting when members enacted its Welcoming City Ordinance, a "watered-down" version of the Sanctuary

City Ordinance. There was fear-mongering behind this dilution. She urged the decriminalization of immigration status.

Public Comment Dissatisfaction

Resident Valerie Noonan took issue with President Colón's earlier statement that Public Comment is a time for dialogue and conversation under Rules of Council. However, he has explicitly stated at other times that Public Comment is not a time for back-and-forth but for Council to hear concerns. It is even less of a dialogue when Public Comment is moved to the end of the meeting. She additionally asked what Council will do to bring about the return of the 17 arrested workers.

Ancestors Were Immigrants, Too

Resident Tara Whiting observed that everyone in the room comes from ancestors who are all immigrants. Many of them also came here illegally. It is absurd that the 17 workers could just be taken away last week by government officials without due process. She encouraged Council to enact a Welcoming City Ordinance.

Unprepared for ICE

Josie Lopez said Council did not prepare for the ICE raid and asked members to think about what they will do to protect those taken in the raid. She said that she and those who stand with her will be the first line of defense to their own with or without the City's permission but it would be nice if they could work together.

Suggested Solutions

Resident Leo Atkinson, co-Chairman of the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, decried moving Public Comment to the end of the agenda. He called the ICE raids acts of terrorism. Mr. Atkinson offered several suggested actions: 1. Provide funding for legal aid to help them get legal status or freedom after being abducted, 2. Alert the community to tips regarding ICE presence, and 3. Organize aid for friends and family of those who may be taken in the future.

Training Encouraged

Resident Jon Irons, who also identified himself as a Lehigh County Commissioner, took issue with Council moving Public Comment to the end of the agenda. He said it eroded public trust. As for the ICE situation, a huge power vacuum has opened up in this country and it is not unique to Bethlehem. Organizers and activists are fighting back, but he encouraged Council members to join forces with them. He encouraged taking a non-violent direct action training session for elected officials.

Words of Wisdom

Resident Alex Knapp is concerned about the rise in fascism. He is an educator who sought to enlighten by reading the poem "Those Born Later" by a man who fled Nazi Germany.

Political Crossroads

Allentown resident Stephen Micek said this country is at a crossroads. He decried the lacking due process involved in the ICE raid and said it is our duty to bring back the 17 workers who were taken and do all that we can to prevent similar incidents.

Change Immigration Policies

Fara Farbod identified himself as a naturalized immigrant who knows pain. He spoke of the bombs that were dropped today on Iran. He also denounced the United States' immigration policies and said that too many people have died from these policies. He reminded that some of this country's history involves enslaving some of those brought here, exterminating the natives, and imperialist policies leading to the deaths of at least 20 million people. He said this history must be confronted and attitudes toward foreigners must change.

Brave Action Needed

Regina Padilla of Allentown said moving Public Comment to the end was inappropriate. She added that being undocumented is not a crime. It is a civil matter no worse than jaywalking. They were hard-working people. She also believes that the raid is the result of the City being unwilling to take a stand on ICE. The time is now to act.

Fighting Back

Brett Schaefer read in the news that a mayoral candidate in New York was arrested for trying to stop a similar ICE raid there. He credited Brad Lander for his willingness to ask questions and stand up to authorities on this issue. This suggested to him that there are alternatives to being passive and simply letting ICE do what it wants.

Suggested Action

Resident Alice Mickel said Council has asked what it can do about ICE. Several suggestions have been made including 1. Passing a Welcoming City Ordinance, 2. Participate in the rapid response training and network to notify the public of ICE activity and create witnesses to events, 3. Use your Council visibility to be seen as an authority figure fighting back. She also disagreed with the Mayor's characterization that protestors did their best to be respectful and stay on the streets. "There was no interest in being respectful. We purposely did not work with the police," she said. She added that the protest took over the Fahy Bridge.

Help Others

Kelsey Morrison of Fountain Hill is an educator. It is in her nature to help others. It is also the job of those on Council to help others. She urged them to help other but if they will not or cannot, at least act to stave off the enemy now. She predicted the target will change and some day the rest of us will be at risk.

Need it in Writing

A Lehigh Valley resident who gave his first name of Zach is upset to see ICE rounding up immigrants. He urged Council to pass Welcoming City legislation. Despite past comments that Bethlehem considers itself an inclusive city, he does not believe that Bethlehem can consider itself so without this legislation. He believed having something in writing would give the community, including immigrants, more trust that they can trust City police. He also wants City police to take a more aggressive stance that if ICE operations occur here, that they are done by the book.

Procedures Criticized

Resident Stephen Antalics said tonight's meeting is another example of Council's ineptitude and lack of leadership. Speakers have been allowed to consistently hold an approximate minute of silence associated with those arrested in Wednesday's raid. Clearly, this strategy was orchestrated by audience members. However, in a properly run meeting, only one person would have been granted this period of silence because allowing so many to do it would be duplicating the same message.

Silence is Complicity

Ilienis Gotier said she is the mother of two. She teaches her children that silence is violence, silence is complicity. She urged all to demand that representatives advocate for all of us but she said we cannot trust them to do so. For this reason, all must unite to speak out, protest, join groups to support the immigrant community, and urge passage of legislation to protect immigrants. (Editor's Note: The synopsis of this speaker's comments was written from a transcription provided by a bilingual City employee.)

Hypocrisy

Paul Christian was disgusted by news of the raid. The same people who rail against welfare and handouts demand deportation for these men for the crime of working a job, for putting groceries on the table and paying rent. We have more in common with these immigrants than with the politicians going along with the raids.

Who Will Help?

Someone identifying herself only as Evelyn said some on Council appeared to be disinterested that 17 people are missing. She identified herself as a trans woman and feared that she could be targeted by the government as well. She asked who will protect her.

ICE Raid is City Business

Resident Raya Abdelaal was present for several meetings last year in which Gaza was discussed. The message, she said, was that such matters were not City business. Wednesday's raid occurred in Bethlehem now clearly making this national topic City business. She said Council should show up to protests and the mentioned rapid response meetings. Tell activist leaders when ICE is expected to come to Bethlehem.

Take it to Heart

A woman who did not provide her name said she has participated in ceasefire vigils for the Middle East since October of 2023. She sees parallels in concerns for human rights in standing up for what is right. She said she protests weekly for the people who cannot. She asked City officials to take to heart what the audience has said tonight.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 11:17 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk