

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
10 East Church Street - Town Hall  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, September 7, 2021 - 7:00 PM

INVOCATION

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

President Waldron called the meeting to order. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Grace Crampsie Smith, Olga Negrón, J. William Reynolds, Paige Van Wirt, and Adam R. Waldron, 7.

CITATIONS

*Honoring José Cruz*

President Waldron presented a Citation to José Cruz on the occasion of his retirement from the Health Department after over 28 years of service. The Members of Council applauded Mr. Cruz and wished him well in his retirement.

Mr. Cruz remarked that he needed to correct the fact that he had been with the city for 33 years. He is thankful for the opportunity to work for the Health Department and he enjoyed the opportunity to serve many people in the city.

*Honoring Craig Kennedy*

President Waldron read the Citation for Craig Kennedy on the occasion of his retirement from the Police Department after over 20 years of service and stated the Citation will be mailed to him.

*Honoring Robert Toronzi Jr.*

President Waldron read the Citation for Robert Toronzi Jr. on the occasion of his retirement from the Police Department after over 20 years of service and stated the Citation will be mailed to him.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 15, 2021 and August 17, 2021

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

*Sinkhole*

Tara Mahoney, 2003 Mary Street, shared pictures with Council of Stanhope Street; she lives on the corner of Mary and Stanhope. These pictures show a sink hole that has begun to start in the street. The pictures show her curb sinking and cracks in the street. She has brought this to the Streets attention and they tried to blame her water spouts. She contacted Engineering and came into the city and they came out and admitted to her that the sinkhole is causing damage to her property. The only way to fix it is if they rip up the entire street, Stanhope Street. She was told by Engineering that the Streets Department will not do anything about it until the sinkhole opens up. She pays her taxes and the fact that she was told by the engineer that she would be lucky if they would put a band aid on this, she does not agree with that. Ms. Mahoney is coming to Council for their help to fix this problem.

President Waldron stated he is not sure the city's policy regarding sinkholes and the repairing of them. That is something where he would refer her to the Public Works Department. He added that Mike Alkhal, Director of Public Works is at this meeting this evening. He could reach out to you about what different options might be available to try to help solve this situation. He does understand this is a frustrating situation but unfortunately there is nothing that City Council can do so he would forward Ms. Mahoney to the full time professionals who handle these situations. He then asked Mr. Alkhal to step out in the hallway to speak to Ms. Mahoney.

#### *Political Contributions*

Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, explained that most of the contributions made to Council were made by private citizens and generally in the amounts of the low one hundreds of dollars. Each contribution made by a citizen implies expectation and for most citizens if not all, those expectations are a good government and concern for the community welfare. If a candidate accepts these contributions it also implies a commitment to those expectations. There are other forms of contributions from people within the community, some might be well-wishers wishing for the success of the candidate and others out of state have their own personal interests. Some of these people out of state have made contributions 10 to 20 times more than the average citizen of the city. So if you apply that to those contributions, there is an expectation and that becomes clear. Mr. Antalics noted what he finds disturbing is that in some recent decisions involving property developments of a person from a major contribution to candidates the vote was 4 to 3, not 7 to 0. This vote was in contradiction to a study made of the city residents who are familiar with the area who voted against the variance or the zoning change. There are two conflicts here, is not a person elected by the general citizenry responsible to the wishes of the majority of that community when they when they tell that person clearly what they wish to have in terms of a vote. But when a person accepts a major contribution from a developer from out of state and votes contrary to the wishes of the public this implies two things. Mr. Antalics continued to say that it implies a conflict of interest or an ethical problem. If I am sitting at a table and accepted a donation from a developer and an issue came up involving this developer, I would recuse and not vote because there is the implication of a conflict of interest. These things are happening and nothing is being done. He recalls in the past meeting heated exchanges between private citizens and Members of Council during this very issue. Why did the 3 opposing vote no. Mr. Antalics suggest that somebody review these cases and determine whether in fact there was a conflict of interest or an ethical problem. We had this with another City Council Member and that went all the way up to the Grand Jury. He wants someone to look into the legality or accuracy of what he is saying because this is troublesome and needs to be investigated and determine whether there is a conflict of interest or an ethical problem.

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

None.

5. OLD BUSINESS

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

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. *Fire Chief – Request to amend EMS Fees*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated September 1, 2021 from Fire Chief Warren Achey requesting Council to approve an EMS fee modification ordinance.

President Waldron stated the Ordinance will be placed on the September 21, 2021 agenda for First Reading.

- B. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Touchstone Theatre – Touchstone Theatre Festival Unbound*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated September 2, 2021 from City Solicitor William P. Leeson. Esq., with an attached resolution and associated Use Permit Agreement with Touchstone Theatre for the Festival Unbound event at Parham Park, Esperanza Garden (Greenway between Webster Street and Taylor Street), and Sand Island East taking place from October 1 through 3, 2021.

President Waldron stated Resolution 10 B is on the agenda.

- C. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce by and through its Downtown Bethlehem Association – Lost Tavern Brewing, LLC and Social Still, LLC – 2021 Harvest Fest*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated September 2, 2021 from City Solicitor William P. Leeson, Esq., with an attached resolution and associated Use Permit Agreement with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce by and through its Downtown Bethlehem Association and the sub-permittees are Lost Tavern Brewing, LLC and Social Still, LLC for the Harvest Fest for the premises shown in the exhibit attached to the agreement.

President Waldron stated Resolution 10 C is on the agenda.

7. REPORTS

- A. *President of Council*
- B. *Mayor*

*World Heritage*

Mayor Donchez stated there will be an update on the World Heritage status at the September 21, 2021 Council Meeting.

*Social Work and Police Initiative*

Kristen Wenrich, Health Director explained she would like to talk about a program that the Health Bureau is collaborating with the Police Department on. Over the past year Police Departments have had a lot of negative attention in the news. We are fortunate in the City of Bethlehem to have such a proactive Police Department that has worked with us on many health and social issues including heroin and opioid overdoses, project lifesaver, highway safety programs, and child abuse prevention programs, just to name a few. Most recently we have collaborated with the Police Department on a program to integrate social work into the department. This initiative was borne out of our strategic planning process that started in late 2019 and early 2020 where we wanted to put more focus on social determinates of health because of the impact that social needs have on physical health. As part of this focus we approached the Police Department in the spring of 2020 about working together to create a pilot program. During this time we also reached out to Kutztown University because we had limited resources. We had a social worker that was working many different projects at the time. We knew that we needed some extra resources to bring in for this pilot and Kutztown University has a social worker program with a bachelor's and master's program. We were fortunate that they collaborated with us on this initiative. Last year we had one full time intern and this year we will have two interns, one of which is here today. The basic premise of the program was to incorporate social workers to support the Police Department and fostering healthy relationships which ultimately provide a healthy and safe community in the City of Bethlehem by assisting individuals with social service areas of need. Ms. Wenrich continued with the three components of the program. One component is training; we want to strengthen the Bethlehem Police Department to improve responses to community needs during police encounters. Another component is Police support, to incorporate social workers in the Bethlehem Police Department to reduce the amount of time they are spending on information referrals for social service issues. Another component is community support which would be supporting our residents and connecting them to appropriate community resources through a referral process. In the summer of 2020 we worked on a model pilot program and we launched the pilot program in November of 2020. We trained 22 officers and an additional 13 officers in March of 2021. The initial 22 officers were in one platoon. We decided to pilot this program in one and then we brought on additional officers in March and they were part of the Housing Authority and Community Policing divisions. Throughout the pilot program that ran from November of 2020 through July 2021, 26 officers or close to 75% of those officers who were trained were actually participated and referred at least one individual to the program so we have high participation rates among officers. Our officers also completed a pre-test and the beginning of the pilot and post-test at the end of the pilot. We are currently evaluating the post-test results because that is providing us with important feedback that we can then use as we are planning to expand the program to other platoons. A police officer will go on a call and assess the situation and if they determine there is a social service gap they will complete a referral form. They will send that referral form to our social worker. Ms. Wenrich explained that the social worker will receive the form contact the client complete intake form and determine if the client needs a home visit, a visit to the Bethlehem Health Bureau or additional phone calls. The information will be entered into a data base so we are tracking

various information regarding the client and really case manage that client with either connecting them to the resources they need or in some cases its reconnecting them to the resources they had been involved with. Now we can follow up with the client at one month and three months. The types of referrals we receive include individuals for domestic violence, intimate partner violence, inhabitable living conditions, various mental health crisis situations, and family intervention needs which includes parenting skills, and family disputes, at risk for homelessness and food insecurity. She added that other referrals include disability or veteran services, home care, elder care gap and substance abuse. Ms. Wenrich then introduced Jordan Westerman who is our social worker in the Health Bureau. She has taken this program and embraced this program, working through the pilot, collecting all the data, and now ready to launch in the expansion. She has the data to present on the pilot program.

Ms. Westerman began with the reasons for social services referral and added that some of these clients have more than one reason. This graph shows the reasons that include: undiagnosed crisis, home care gap, elder care, medication noncompliance, parenting skills, suicidal ideations, uninhabitable living conditions, at-risk homelessness, depression, family dispute, domestic violence, disability, veteran services, and intimate partner violence. Sometimes a client may come in for domestic violence but upon speaking with them they may have some home insecurity so we are looking more of a holistic approach. One thing is not going to solve every issue that they have so we try to figure out all of the reasons why they are coming into the program and making sure that we meet the needs they are experiencing. Ms. Westerman explained undiagnosed crisis is the number one reason for referring. We are seeing a lot of home care gaps and other gaps, medication noncompliance. This graph shows the data and some of the reasons for referral. The next slide shows referral locations. We mapped out all the addresses for the reasons for referral. Since the beginning of the pilot until now we were able to reach a large part of the City of Bethlehem even with just one platoon. Ms. Westerman explained since the beginning of the pilot program we had 75 referrals and keep in mind that is just from the one platoon. She added that 36 consented to the program, meaning when she called them they said yes they would like to hear more about services. She noted that is 49%. She continued to say that 31 did not consent, they said no or we were not able to contact them, and there were 8 involuntary referrals which is 10%. As a mandated reporter there were some things that came in that she was required to make a report on, those would be children youth calls, elder care, issue crisis interventions, things like that. She continued with race and ethnicity data and noted that this is very important so we know who we are serving and can look at gaps. We have 70% non-Hispanic or Latino, 26% Hispanic or Latino, and 4% unknown. We had 74% identify as White, 21% unknown, 4% Black American, 0% Indian/Alaskan Native, 1% Multiracial, and 0% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. This is our race and ethnicity data so far. Next are the age groups and of the 75 referrals the largest age group that we are seeing is between that 30 to 40 range. The next is the 50 to 60 range but we have had people come into the program and be referred from age under 10 all the way up to 90 years old. Ms. Westerman continued with connection to services and the 30 day follow-up. One of the important things we do as social workers is we make sure that we are following up to make sure that what we are putting into place is working. She is really excited about this because at the 30 day follow up 29 clients were still connected to services, which means 66% of the people that consented to the program were connected still at 30 days. She added that 7 were not connected and that is either because we were not able to reach them or they just declined treatment. Then there were 8 involuntary referrals that were still connected after 30 days. She feels that the people who are consenting to the program are actually utilizing the services which will lessen the amount of time that Police Officers are going to be out at that same

house with the same mental health referrals. Ms. Westerman continued with referral samples and success stories. Police responded to a person in crisis who has struggled for a long time with depression and were able to successfully get him to the hospital for mental health treatment. Upon follow up, the mother stated to Ms. Westerman, "I am extremely thankful for this program, it was such a positive encounter with police." She noted that was one of the positive stories that we had. Another client we had that was referred multiple times for drug and alcohol issues decided to go to treatment after refusing many times and having multiple encounters with police. He has not been referred to her again, so there are the successes we get to see through this program. Another person recently was in a mental health crisis was found outside without clothes on. The police came and could have easily made an arrest but could see that he had a mental health crisis so he was referred to the program. Upon being referred to the program, he had been referred multiple times to other programs; we learned there was a language barrier. The reason he was not getting successfully connected into treatment was because our people were assessments and were not understanding what was really going on so we were finally able to connect him to a place speak to him and understand what is going on to get him adequate treatment. He was able to go to the hospital and get the help that he needed.

Ms. Wenrich then talked about the next steps with the program. We were fortunate to be able to secure funding to continue this program. We wanted to make sure before we expanded the program we had funding in order to meet the needs with all police officers potentially referring. Funding was secured through our maternal and child health grant. We approached the Pennsylvania Department of Health and asked if we could integrate this into an already existing grant. This grant supports the social worker salary so we can allocate a decent portion of her time now to implementing this program. We were able to increase her percentage of time dedicated to this program. Ms. Wenrich explained that she and Police Chief Michelle Kott are continuing to explore other funding resources as well as this program continues. We will continue working with Kutztown University, last year we had one intern with us and this year we now have two interns with us so we can continue to tap into that pool of master's level interns. The goal is now to expand the program to all Police Department platoons. We are looking at trainings in September and getting ready to launch so all police officers can refer. We are looking at measuring long term outcomes, reduction in repeat encounters and improving health and quality of life among participants. We are looking at opportunities to continue training for officers in various health and behavioral health topics. When we did a pre-test one of the questions we asked was as far as gaps and needs and training. Lastly we are looking at creation of a multi-disciplinary team. Many of these folks that we encounter are already connected in some way, shape, or form to certain parts of the system whether it be through county mental health, substance abuse, or private providers. So we are looking at bringing some of those providers together to have these multi-disciplinary teams so we are all working together to improve the health of these individuals that are referred to the program.

Police Chief Kott remarked she could not say this any better herself that what was just said. She is very excited about this program and is glad everyone got a chance to hear about some of the data that we have been compiling from the pilot program. She wanted to start by thanking the Mayor and City Council for your patience with this program. After the murder of George Floyd there was a push for immediate action, however, we needed to do this the right way. This program that we were able to put together with the Health Bureau to streamline communication and really bridge that gap between law enforcement and social services has been extremely well received, not only in the community but in the department as well. Chief Kott

does truly believe that this program is going to enable us to better serve the community by individuals after they have interactions with officers. Also being put into contact with our social workers like Jordan who does a phenomenal job and connect them with not only local, county, or other community resources that are going to effectively cut down on subsequent police calls for service, that could end up being a use of force encounter or a negative encounter. She wishes we could have more feedback from citizens like that mother with saying it was a positive police encounter. One of the feedbacks she has heard from a citizen was, "Wow this is a police program this is amazing". Chief Kott looks forward to expanding this program and continuing to work with our partners in the Health Department, the support of all of you as well as the City Administration.

Dr. Van Wirt stated bravo, this is very well done. It takes a lot of initiative to start a program like this. She has nothing but positive praise for what you have done. She works for the Northampton County agency on aging going in with social workers to do home evaluation for at-risk elder adults and she knows it is hard. It is hard to establish that bond that contact to get them to feel like they can trust you and want to follow up with the program. What you have taken on is not easy and she really respects the effort you have put into it. She would like to hear two data points, the time from the police contact to social work contact. Of course we would love it to be 30 minutes and realistically with the staff you have that is not possible but she does think that is an important data point. The second one would be the category of calls that the people who refused to go with you are in. What does that look like and who is refusing. This program is commendable and thank you very much, this is so necessary.

Mr. Colón noted we have talked about this at many meetings over the past year now. The Bethlehem Township Police had their health program models but the outcomes are all the same. When we have people with mental health problems or whether it is drug and alcohol abuse or it is an elderly person in their home who needs help, if we could intervene before things rise to certain levels that would be great. We hear a lot about this labor shortage from all different kinds of sectors, and he queried if they are seeing with the providers who are making referrals any challenges with services being provided to some of the individuals being referred due to capacity issues with some of the partners that you have in the community.

Ms. Westerman stated that yes and no because when we refer and it does not work out that is why we do the follow up. It is not just one call to say okay I am going to send you here, it is having that communication throughout the week, maybe a couple of weeks to make sure that we are sending them to the adequate referral. But a lot of the people that we work closely with we really do not run into an issue where they are not getting connected. Sometimes it may be hard to initially connect them we are making sure that they are getting connected to that service. She is not seeing that because she feels that the partners we work with know the goal we are trying to accomplish and they have been great with assistance to the right place for the client.

Mr. Colón thanked her for all the work she does and for the following up with these clients. He mentioned that he has been in touch with the Clerk's Office to try and schedule a Public Safety Committee Meeting to dive into things a little bit further before we get into the budget season. He applauds all the work that has been done and added that this is a new start to this and has taken a lot of hours of time and attention.

Mr. Reynolds thanked everyone involved in this and added that this is really impressive and amazing work. It is always easier to come up with ideas than it is to come up with plans. It is certainly not easier to come up with ideas and actually implement the plans so he wanted to congratulate all involved for the great work here. He has a question for Chief Kott; he appreciates all of her hard work with this. He asked if there was anything in here positive or negative that she saw and was somewhat surprised by that you did not necessarily maybe think was going to be an outcome of this particular program.

Chief Kott informed something that surprised her was how well received this program was, not only in the community but in the police department as well. It can be difficult when you introduce a program into any type of organization whether it is law enforcement, education, or health care to really have it take off from the beginning. It speaks to the Health Bureau with getting down the training that they provided to the officers, the programming and workflow that we put into place just how quickly the referrals started pouring in and the support that we were receiving from the individuals that were the subject of the referrals. Then there were the officers with putting that faith in the Health Bureau and really wanting to find out how everything went, and asking did that individual get connected to services and are they still receiving those services. She added that the officers wanted to find out how the referrals went, that was an extremely positive thing as well as how well received the program as a whole was.

Mr. Reynolds noted that is wonderful to hear. A couple things that jump out there are just the breakdown we saw even in some of the demographics. It is roughly kind of similar to the breakdown of the demographics of our city which shows that a lot of these issues affect people equally both where they live as far as their background is concerned. While it is a smaller sample size it is important as we talk about these types of initiatives going forward. Mr. Reynolds also thinks those numbers as far as the involuntary reporting; there are a lot of people on this Council who in their other jobs were mandatory reporters as well so the fact that we are getting the fact that we are getting to those people. It is obviously not good that those types of things need to be reported but it is good that we are the ones doing that reporting. It shows that if the system was different some of those issues might not be working their way through the system which is designed to respond to a lot of these issues. One of the other things that was talked about and just the fact that our Police Department is working with our Health Department and working with institutions of higher learning is that it is this kind of cross-disciplinary team that will be needed to respond to some of these issues. For too long we have had systems where it is like one person responds or that the system has not been connected to follow these people through. So really planning this system here and taking a look at these different interactions you all deserve a lot of credit for this. One of the things that has been talked about is who should respond to these types of calls and you have reiterated just how important it is for all of our professionals to play different roles. He is not sure if that is with the chain of command or the overall process here. This whole thing is super impressive. This is absolutely a great start. We need to make sure that funding these programs in the future is a priority. He is excited about what you guys have been able to do. City Council stands ready to help out and see what the future holds for these types of initiatives in City Hall.

Ms. Crampsie Smith stated kudos to both the Health Department and the Police Department. This is awesome and she wanted to commend Jordan and that she is familiar with what she is doing with our president and having teams in high school, that is awesome and you are really making a difference. The key to success in doing and meeting the services of the folks



in our community is collaboration and coordination amongst different systems. That is what we are seeing here. It is good that you are looking at the multi-disciplinary team approach. She feels strongly that the county is the one that is primarily responsible for human services and all the agencies. It is really important to get the county and agencies involved that we need especially with things like aging and mental health. Ms. Crampsie Smith would be more than willing to help on that. Having worked in the county she saw that some of the needs are aging, mental health, and at risk of homelessness. Again, she wanted to say kudos, this is awesome and she is proud and grateful.

Ms. Negrón stated bravo, she is proud of the work that has been done. She queried which platoon was used, was it middle shift, first shift, or late shift.

Chief Kott informed they used platoon one which is assigned to days and middles.

Ms. Negrón was just curious about what calls and what the time of days they were. She then asked about the 31 that did not consent and wondered if they had data on them, she wondered if they did not understand what this meant. It was mentioned that one had a language issue and they were able to send them to the appropriate person. We do have many bilingual services in the Lehigh Valley, she just wonders if we can get data, maybe not today but in the future about this.

Ms. Westerman stated they can do that. One of the things that we do have is a language line called Proprio that translates in multiple languages.

Ms. Negrón informed she is very familiar with the language programs that are out there. She has been in hospitals where doctors are using the system and it is extremely frustrating because the patient is in pain and is scared and they do not understand that conversation is just not working. She is really glad they are working with Kutztown University because locally especially for students we have highest amount of Latinos in the college. She works very closely with them and she is hoping that in the future you get to have an intern that is bilingual. With the people she works with and serves, language is a big problem. She and her family speak English very well but when we talk about personal issues we do that in Spanish. She noted we should still look out for grants because the results of what you are doing will help a lot of grants that are being provided. This is a beautiful connection and she believes that since you already have data that shows that this works you should keep an eye out for grants.

President Waldron stressed this is a great start to a program that it has been a long time looked forward to. He asked as things progress and this grows that you keep Council informed, especially with those data points as the sample size grows it will give us a better indication of how it is affecting and helping our residents as well as what potential tweaks and changes can be made to make it even better. He queried what would be the timeline that you think you would be able to come to us again and give us an update. It does not have to be in such a formal setting because we did get a lot of background information, even if it is an email or power point in the future.

Chief Kott stated about 6 months. With the rest of the department being trained in September being able to do the pre-test and the post-test and being able to get all that good data,

take the advice we received here tonight and making sure we include that, she would say in about 6 months.

President Waldron remarked a Public Safety Committee Meeting might be the venue for that too in the future. He then asked if there is a name for this program, a working name or a clever acronym.

Ms. Wenrich stated we have been calling this the Social Work Integration Program. We realize that is not really catchy but for us but we understand what that is and we are trying to promote it to the community. We thought about different acronyms but by all means if City Council has any ideas please share those.

President Waldron noted we will put our best and brightest on it.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

A. *Bill No. 25 – 2021 – Amend Article 342 – Affordable Housing Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance – LERTA Ordinance*

The Clerk read Bill No. 25-2021 – Amend Article 342 – Affordable Housing Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance – LERTA Ordinance sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF  
LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF  
PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING ARTICLE 342 OF THE CODIFIED  
ORDINANCES ENTITLED LOCAL ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION  
TAX ASSISTANCE – ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AREA

Dr. Van Wirt noted she will not go on about this too much because everyone here has heard about this but just for clarity's sake she will not be supporting this tonight. She believes that the money that is set aside for affordable housing is far too low, it is not based on data and she feels that is a disservice to our affordable housing crisis that we are facing right now. We can do better for our citizens and we should. That is why she is not supporting this bill tonight.

Ms. Negrón remarked last time we voted on this bill she voted in favor of it and that was mostly because of her last reaction to the conversation we had right before we voted in talking about the putting funding aside. But in general when she spoke of it she is not in agreement. It is all located in industrial areas. The problems the developers will encounter digging in this area will be unknown. This could just jeopardize everything. As Dr. Van Wirt mentioned the amount of money that we are requesting them to pay (in lieu of building affordable units) is not the incentive, it is going to be easier for them to pay it than to create affordable housing. The point should be creating affordable housing. We need to put in a higher fee and she is disappointed that nothing was changed with this. She will not be supporting this bill tonight.

Ms. Crampsie Smith stated she wanted to be clear she is totally for inclusionary housing in Bethlehem and all of Council will agree this is a real issue. She added with the pros come the cons, we are one of the best cities to live in this country. The flip side is that it is attracting more

people raising the cost of housing. Unfortunately the people who were born and raised here will want to stay and retire here. Many people have come up to her and said they had to leave Bethlehem. She just wanted to be clear and say that she will be voting against this and that as much as she is for affordable housing it is utterly imperative that we have a standardized objective formula we can substantiate for this fee-in-lieu of, this is not standardized. The \$25,000 dollars could be corrected and in her mind that is not a standardized objective formula versus the high affordability index that Ms. Karner proposed at \$42,500. We need to be able to back up what we are doing here she feels uneasy that we are not able to back up the \$25,000 payment in-lieu fee. She will be voting against this.

Voting AYE: Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, and Mr. Waldron, 4. Voting NAY: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Negrón, and Ms. Crampsie Smith, 3. Bill No. 25-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-24 was passed on Final Reading.

*B. Bill No. 26 – 2021 – Amend 2021 Capital Budget for Non-Utilities – Budget Adjustment*

The Clerk read Bill No. 26-2021 – Amend 2021 Capital Budget for Non-Utilities – Budget Adjustment sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING  
THE 2021 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Negrón, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 26-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-25 was passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

*A. Approve Affordable Housing LERTA Resolution (in connection with Bill No. 25-2021)*

Mr. Callahan and Mr. Waldron sponsored Resolution No. 2021-146 that authorized the properties identified in Exhibit A attached hereto to collectively constitute the “Affordable Housing LERTA District” for purposes of the above-referenced Ordinance, all of which properties shall be entitled to the benefits, privileges and duties set forth in such Ordinance or as such Ordinance as may be subsequently amended.

Dr. Van Wirt thinks that Ms. Negrón referred to her issue with this in that she does not understand why the LERTA boundary lines were drawn just for the industrial area when we have a lot of infill housing needs. She feels like they are too limited to new development when we all recognize that we cannot build out of an affordable housing crisis. We should have looked at way to incorporate our hurting neighborhoods into this LERTA program as well. She is going to vote no.

Ms. Negrón feels this Bill we just passed it is so not affordable housing that this resolution should not be called affordable housing resolution because it is not going to. All the developers are going to pay the \$25,000 payment in lieu fee and they are not going to create affordable housing. It is just so backwards. She is going to vote against this.

Voting AYE: Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, and Mr. Waldron, 4. Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Ms. Negrón, 3. The Resolution passed.

B. *Approve Use Permit Agreement – Touchstone Theatre – Touchstone Theatre Festival Unbound*

Ms. Negrón and Dr. Van Wirt sponsored Resolution No. 2021-147 that authorized to execute a Use Permit Agreement with Touchstone Theatre for the Festival Unbound event on October 1 through 3, 2021.

Voting AYE: Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Negrón, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

C. *Approve Use Permit Agreement - Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce by and through its Downtown Bethlehem Association – Lost Tavern Brewing, LLC and Social Still, LLC – 2021 Harvest Fest*

Mr. Callahan and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2021-148 that authorized to execute a Use Permit Agreement with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, by and through its Downtown Bethlehem Association, Lost Tavern Brewing LLC, and Social Still, LLC for Harvest Fest on October 2, 2021.

Voting AYE: Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Negrón, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

11. NEW BUSINESS

*Public Works Committee Meeting*

Chairwoman Crampsie Smith announced a Public Works Committee Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 16, 2021 at 6:00 PM in Town Hall to discuss the Responsible Contractor Bill and the Contracting Preference Bill.

*Committee of the Whole Meeting*

President Waldron announced a Committee of the Whole will be held on Tuesday, September 28, 2021 at 6:00 PM in Town Hall to discuss the American Rescue Plan Act Funds.

*Rescue Plan Act Funds*

Mr. Callahan mentioned he appreciates what the other Council Members spoke about with affordable housing. He knows some did not agree but when it comes time to allocate these Rescue Plan Funds which he thinks will be around \$32 million dollars he would like to suggest that we move \$5 million dollars of that money for affordable housing, he hopes other Council

Members has his support in this. If we do not do this now, it will never be done. He knows that there are a few people on Council who feel that Bethlehem is sitting in the driver's seat and we do not need economic development. Just released a few hours ago, J. B. Reilly of Allentown announced a \$70 million dollar plan for high-end apartments and retail in the City of Easton and that goes along with a multi-million dollar project with 265 units by Peron Development. Mr. Callahan knows that many other developers are going down to Easton. He hopes that we all use commonsense and that we realize that our city is in competition the other two major cities in the Lehigh Valley. We have to earn everything we go for, and if anybody is under the illusion that we are not under competition from other cities you are being naïve about it. Mr. Callahan hopes everybody understands where we are going. Some did not agree with the dollar amount, the \$25,000 for the affordable housing but he does think it is a fair number. He thinks it is enough money and if you get enough units in there it will be more money to go in the slush fund to do affordable housing so we can really make an impact. His idea of making an impact is getting 30 or 40 units of affordable housing in there. If we can do that in the next five years that would be a great step forward. He just hopes those members that are always talking about affordable housing will give their support when he proposed \$5 million dollars towards affordable housing.

*Public Comment-Phone*

Dr. Van Wirt noted she has a few questions and she knows sometimes what she talks about is not too popular but she feels the role of City Council is to ask some tough questions. She asked why we stopped allowing the citizens to call in for public comment. She does not know who made that decision and is asking where it came from and why we decided to do that.

President Waldron stated that was his decision.

Dr. Van Wirt asked for an explanation on why we decided to do that.

President Waldron explained as we opened up City Hall he thought the public could come to make their comments here, as we had always done for decades.

Dr. Van Wirt noted that is right but since we have changes in technology now that really allows us to have a decent phone in for public comment. She added particularly because we allow our City Council Members to participate remotely it sends the opposite message of what we are trying to do which is access to comment at City Council Meetings should be broadly available for all of our citizens, particularly the ones who have mobility issues to call in and comment. She would that you think of that because she thinks it is really important that our citizens feel welcome in any way, shape, or form that they can contribute.

President Waldron replied he did send out a memorandum and did not get any feedback on it so he assumed everyone was in agreement but he will talk this over.

*Vaccinations*

Dr. Van Wirt continued to say that the City of Bethlehem is self-insuring in terms of health insurance. She understands right now at least we do not have a requirement for our employees to be vaccinated against COVID which means we have enormous vulnerability and financial exposure in terms of people being hospitalized in a potentially preventable situation. She

wondered if she could ask your thoughts on what the city may be doing to mitigate this financial liability.

Mr. Evans reported we have had internal talks about that requirement. There are a number of concerns including collective bargaining groups and the right to private choice versus the liability that you speak of to the city. To date we have been successful in our numbers and keeping our employees healthy. We have had positive cases both unvaccinated and a few vaccinated people but we continue to offer preventative mitigation throughout the city and City Hall. We will continue to review that and he thinks it is something that needs to come through with the Mayor and our Legal Department and also see what other municipalities are doing before we take a step to make it mandatory. Mr. Evans added it is a pretty big step that could bring battles along the way but it is something we have not taken off the table yet.

Dr. Van Wirt stated absolutely, she is not saying we should make the vaccine mandatory but a lot of private enterprises, which we are not, have taken on a surcharge on health insurance to offset the potential exposure we as a city have for paying for someone in an ICU for three months and then six months of rehab. She just wondered if you are gathering data from other cities and how they are approaching it because she thinks this is not something we can just sit on without understanding the risk we are putting ourselves in.

Mr. Evans pointed out it is becoming more and more of a conversation as you watch the nightly news and we talk to what we call the six cities coalition, none of them have taken that step yet. We are all aware of it and are discussing it as time goes on and it may be something that becomes more prevalent in the future.

#### *Staying Remote*

Mr. Callahan wanted to make it clear that all of you know how much he loves being in Council Chambers and he would like to be in there but he did lose his wife 15 years ago and he is the only parent left for his two kids. He does not want to take the chance of getting this Delta Variant even though he did have COVID in March. He does not want to take the chance so until this situation is resolved with the virus he would prefer to stay remote. He just wanted to make sure everyone understands that and that is why he will stay remote.

#### *Public Comment-Phone*

Ms. Crampsie Smith remarked that we have not control and things do change daily and she thinks it was great when we were all in City Hall; it is nice to be in person. She is remote tonight because she is sick, not with COVID but she thinks that this virus has become so unpredictable at this point so she would be in favor of letting people call in versus coming into Town Hall. She knows a lot of people do not want to be going indoors right now because unpredictability of the virus and the variant.

#### *Vaccinated Employees*

Mr. Reynolds noted he has a question in reference to Dr. Van Wirt's comments. He queried the percentage of our employees that are vaccinated.

Ms. Wenrich replied we actually tried to gauge that and sent a survey out and unfortunately the response rate was fairly low and the overwhelming majority of those who responded said they were vaccinated so she does not really feel like that is an adequate representation of what is truly in the city for our employees.

Mr. Reynolds mentioned that we do not have an exact number.

Ms. Wenrich stated no, she just has who responded to the survey so she can say that portion is vaccinated but it was a low response rate overall. Off the top of her head she would say about 200 out of our 600 some employees have responded. Also, not everyone came through our clinics, they were going to various providers so it is not like all our employees came to our clinics that we would be able to gather that data through our system.

Mr. Reynolds believes we need to explore all of our options because we do not know what is going to go on in the future as far as how long this is going to be around. Obviously there are a lot of people here who know a lot more about the difference between vaccinated and unvaccinated as far as getting COVID and the chance to spread it. He thinks that we do need to look at all of our options in both the short term and the long term because we do not know how long this is going to be around. Mr. Reynolds does not know if we should necessarily wait to see what other cities are doing as far as the importance is to our community and to our public health. He would echo Dr. Van Wirt's comments and that he 110% supports looking at all of the different options. If we are not going to do some of those options or we are not going to take them for whatever reason that might be understandable but he that is something we should have good answers to about why we decide not to mandate the COVID vaccine. He understands the challenges in collecting that information but in the realm that we are in with public safety and in delivering public city services it is an important fact for us to have a better idea of how many people are vaccinated versus not being vaccinated considering the essential services that we provide.

Ms. Negrón noted she agrees 100% with Dr. Van Wirt and Mr. Reynolds and she works for a law firm with 22 attorneys and staff. They are not mandating that we get vaccinated, however, they ask that all of show our card and send it to HR only so only the HR Department and the partners, because they wanted to know, would know how many of us are vaccinated or not vaccinated in terms of the staff. Nobody else would know and they get to see a percentage of us as a group. That is important for us to know and also to move and find the work that we do in the community directly. She does understand that we have Union contracts and that could be a different kind of nightmare obviously but she does think we need to be proactive about this.

## 12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm.

ATTEST:

Robert G. Vidoni, Esq.  
City Clerk