BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, October 20, 2026 – 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by President Rachel Leon. Present were Justin Amann, Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Jo C. Daniels, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Colleen Laird, and Rachel Leon, 7. (The meeting was called to order at 8:44 PM, nearly 1 ¾ hours after the scheduled commencement, because of a lengthy Public Safety Committee meeting that preceded this one.)

PUBLIC HEARING – 2026 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)

Prior to the consideration of the regular Agenda items, City Council conducted a Public Hearing:

The Public Hearing was to review and accept public comment on the proposed use of funds to be received under the 2026 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) in the amount of $16,711.

Police Chief Michelle Kott said this grant money is intended to fix, replace or expand the existing camera network at traffic intersections. The cameras have been beneficial in investigating motor vehicle accidents, violent crimes, and other critical incidents.

Council Comments

Mr. Callahan wanted to confirm that these are not Flock Safety cameras.

Chief Kott said these have nothing to do with automated license plate readers.

Ms. Laird asked if these are any part of a shared network.

Chief Kott no. There is only internal access by the City's Service Center to assist police or the Public Works Department to monitor road conditions during snow operations. The City could choose to share video on a case-by-case basis.

Public Comment

None.

President Leon announced that a Resolution will be placed on the November 4 Council agenda.

The Public Hearing was adjourned at 8:48 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 6, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Frank Korpics

Mr. Korpics has owned Classic Car Wash at 1926 Stefko Boulevard since 1986. He is concerned that the entrance and exit may be negatively affected by the City's intended redesign of Stefko Boulevard and would greatly impact his business. It was suggested that Mr. Korpics discuss this with Public Works Director Michael Alkhal.

Lisa Yandrisits

Ms. Yandrisits has lodged complaints with the Zoning Office that a neighbor raises chickens and is not permitted to do so. She was told that enforcement should be handled by police. The chickens enter neighbors' yards and attract rodents. She asked what she must do to get this addressed. President Leon asked Chief Kott to speak with Ms. Yandrisits in the hallway on this matter.

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

None.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Kwiatek

Ms. Kwiatek said she attended the meeting on October 13 in which proposed Stefko Boulevard improvements were discussed (alluded to by Mr. Korpics during Public Comment). Part of the purpose of the meeting was to receive resident and business owners' concerns. The goal of the project is to slow traffic and improve safety.

5 A. Rescheduled Tuesday, November 3, 2026 City Council Meeting to Wednesday, November 4, 2026 due to General Election.

Motion by Colón, seconded by Laird, to amend the meeting date because of the General Election. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Motion passed.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Director of Budget & Finance – 2026 42 Tax Collection Services – Tri-State Financial Group

Director of Budget & Finance Linnea Lazarchak recommended an agreement with Tri-State Financial Group to collect, administer, receive and enforce the provisions of Act 511 including all Business Privilege and Mercantile taxes for three years with three additional one-year options. – Item 10 A.

B. City Solicitor – Memo – Civil Service Police Education

Assistant City Solicitor Matthew Deschler recommended amending the police Civil Service Rules by repealing a requirement for police applicants to hold an associate's degree or sixty (60) college credits. The action is intended to broaden the applicant pool. – Item 10 B.

C. Grants Administrator, Community and Economic Development – Memo – Touchstone Theatre Grant – Creative Communities Initiative

Lori Gilio, DCED Grants Administrator, recommended supporting Touchstone Theatre's participation in the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts' Creative Communities Initiative. Touchstone Theatre has been selected to receive up to $25,000 per year for up to four years. The grant program requires a City match of $2,500 per year for up to four years, potentially totaling $10,000. – Item 10 C.

D. City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – 2026 Christmas City Village – LV Chamber of Commerce

Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended executing a Use Permit Agreement with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, as permittee, and the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem, as sub-permittee, for the 2026 Christmas City Village. – Item 10 D.

E. Director of Water & Sewer Resources – Memo – Records Destruction

Director of Water & Sewer Resources Edward Boscola sought approval of records destruction in accordance with the Municipal Records Retention Act. A Resolution will be placed on the November 4 Council agenda.

F. Director of Planning and Zoning – Memo – Zoning Text Amendment -- ADUs

Director of Planning and Zoning Cathy Fletcher recommended an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to establish regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units, update workforce housing incentive requirements, and increase maximum building coverage requirements for single-family detached dwellings in the Rural Residential and Single-Family Residential Districts. The ordinance also amends the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to clarify that the improvement of a lot with an Accessory Dwelling Unit, by itself, is not considered land

development. President Leon said she would refer this matter to the Community Development Committee. A meeting time and date will be announced.

7. REPORTS

A. President of Council

B. Mayor

Mayor Reynolds addressed the proposed Stefko Boulevard improvements. Sketches have been presented, not the final plans. Mayor Reynolds said the City cannot fully block a property owner's land. However, he said there will be some tradeoffs, and not all accommodations can be made because improved safety is needed. Mayor Reynolds announced that the City has won the American Planning Association Pennsylvania Chapter's Statewide Planning Award for the 40 in 10 parks plan. He also encouraged everyone to pay attention to the Bethlehem Area School District's design meetings that will be coming up within a few weeks. Redistricting schools can shape neighborhoods including having socio-economic impacts.

C. Committee Chairs

7 C1. Mr. Amann announced that the Public Safety Committee met at 5:30 PM this evening in Town Hall to review results of the Fire/EMS operations study. Mr. Amann anticipated additional discussions stemming from this information.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8A. Bill No. 28-2026 – Amending Part 13 of the Zoning Ordinance – Data Centers

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

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING PART 13 OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM CODIFIED ORDINANCES, TITLED "ZONING ORDINANCE", FOR THE PURPOSE OF REGULATING DATA CENTER USES.

Ms. Leon sought confirmation that any data center applications received prior to second reading approval tonight would be governed by the old regulations.

Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins said that was correct. It was previously announced that an application has been received for a data center along Industrial Drive. The City will ask the developer for voluntary compliance under the new regulations, but that cooperation is not yet known. Ms. Collins also advised Council that a second application was received prior to tonight's potential enactment of the ordinance. The City also will seek voluntary compliance under the new regulations.

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Kwiatek, Leon, 6; NAY: Daniels, 1. Bill No. 28-2026, now known as Ordinance 2026-28, passed on Final Reading.

8B. Bill No. 29-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Temp Help Account Adjustments – General Fund

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

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

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Bill No. 29-2026, now known as Ordinance 2026-29, passed on Final Reading.

8C. Bill No. 30-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Health Bureau Account Adjustments – General Fund

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

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

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Bill No. 30-2026, now known as Ordinance 2026-30, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. Approve Resolution – 2026 42 Tax Collection Services – Tri-State Financial Group

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized an agreement with Tri-State Financial Group to collect, administer, receive and enforce certain taxes and provisions of the ordinance. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-171 passed.

B. Approve Resolution – Civil Service Police Education – Amendment Appendix B

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized that Section 1(c) of Appendix B of the Civil Service Rules shall be repealed in its entirety and replaced with the following text: "(c) Deleted."

Ms. Kwiatek recognized that it has become a struggle to develop strong applicant "pools" of police recruits. Still, she is concerned with entirely eliminating the requirement of holding either an associate's degree or 60 college credits. She noted that New York City last year reduced the number of required college credits but still maintained some. Ms. Kwiatek pointed out that this is intended to be a pilot initiative and wondered how the criteria for evaluating whether it is judged a success.

Chief Kott said she would like to see more applicants. The Department has not seen enough applicants that meet educational, physical and psychological requirements to fill the many openings resulting from retirements, resignations, and terminations. There are 11 vacancies with more retirements on the way. The City has tried hiring and retention bonuses, intern and explorer programs, a tuition reimbursement program, and an improved advertising campaign. Education is important but she has seen some amazing officers who did not meet the education requirement. The Chief noted that the amendment was passed earlier today by the Civil Service Board.

Ms. Laird understood the need to widen the applicant pool. She believes that a college degree broadens an applicant's experience. She supported reducing the number of credits rather than eliminating the requirement. It was understood that the administration would report the results to Council after one or more hiring cycles for a determination of whether the proposed deletion should continue.

Mr. Colón asked, and was told, that this change would not affect the Department's accreditation.

Ms. Laird wanted to make certain that any modification to Civil Service rules must come before Council.

Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward confirmed that notion.

Human Resources Director Michelle Cichocki said the action tonight would remove the education requirement. It would take future action by Council to reinstate or otherwise return some or all of the education requirement.

Solicitor Steward clarified that a modification could be requested before the Civil Service Board. It would be that board that would trigger consideration by City Council to modify.

AYE: Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 5; NAY: Laird, Kwiatek, 2. Resolution 2026-172 passed.

C. Approve Resolution – Touchstone Theatre Grant – Creative Communities Initiative

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized support for Touchstone Theatre to participate in the Creative Communities Initiative and pledges a match of $2,500 per year for up to four years, totaling $10,000. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-173 passed.

D. Approve Use Permit Agreement – 2026 Christmas City Village – LV Chamber of Commerce

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized a Use Permit Agreement with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce for the 2026 Christmas City Village. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-174 passed.

E. Approve Resolution – Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB 403 Center Street

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized to construct a new 21-foot 7-inch by 6-foot 6-inch freestanding, open sided, wood canopy over an existing pool equipment and trash enclosure located at the rear of the property that will be visible from School Street and partially visible from New Street. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-175 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk