

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, July 21, 2026 – 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Colleen Laird. Present were Justin Amann, Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Jo C. Daniels, and Hillary G. Kwiatek, 6; Absent was Rachel Leon, 1.

Public Hearing: 2026 CDBG/HOME Proposed Allocations

A Public Hearing was held to allow DCED staff to present the City's federal 2026 Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships Program funding recommendations to Council. Following the hearing, DCED will submit a proposed resolution for Council's consideration that would approve the funding recommendations and submission of the City's 2026 Annual Action Plan to HUD.

There was one associated communication:

01 PH. A July 13, 2026 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Laura Collins, Director of Community and Economic Development, submitting materials for review by City Council during this evening's Public Hearing for the 2026 Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships Program allocations. For Program Year 2026, the City will receive \$1,370,309 in CDBG funds and \$388,308.10 in HOME money.

Robert Vidoni, Housing and Community Development Administrator, said the grant funding is administered by the City's Department of Community and Economic Development. He proposed funding 20 of the 23 applications that were received through the Community Development Block Grant program and all three out of three applications submitted to the HOME Investment Partnership Program. The CDBG allocation decreased from 2025 by about 3 percent. The HOME allocation decreased by about 7 percent.

The organizations and funding amounts being recommended for approval were as follows:

CDBG:

1. City of Bethlehem for administration and planning costs	\$229,061.80
2. Community Action Development Corp. of Bethlehem	15,000.00
3. Bethlehem Emergency Shelter, Inc. (BES)	50,546.35
4. Hogar CREA International of Pennsylvania, Inc.	20,000.00
5. Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living	15,000.00
6. ShareCare Faith in Action	10,000.00
7. Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley	20,000.00
8. New Bethany, Inc.	50,000.00

9. Community Action Lehigh Valley	25,000.00
10. North Penn Legal Services	20,000.00
11. Community Action Development Corp. of Bethlehem	66,000.00
12. City Housing Rehab Grants and Loans	100,000.00
13. City Housing Rehab Program Delivery	200,000.00
14. New Bethany, Inc.	50,000.00
15. Bloom for Women	80,000.00
16. Via of the Lehigh Valley, Inc.	168,919.00
17. City; BES; Christ Church UCC	215,781.85
18. City – Future Projects/Grants	10,000.00
19. City – Department of Public Works	0.00
20. Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority	<u>25,000.00</u>
	\$1,370,309.00

HOME:

21. City of Bethlehem for administration and planning costs	38,830.81
22. Community Action Lehigh Valley	58,246.22
23. Pennrose entity	<u>291,231.07</u>
	\$388,308.10

Mr. Vidoni added that unfunded applicants are encouraged to apply for future funding. The City communicates with unsuccessful applicants to try to match them with other funding sources or to advise how they might make future applications more successful.

Public Comment

Sebastian Zawierucha

Mr. Zawierucha encouraged the City to look beyond glitz when approving these grants. He also encouraged supporting projects that are repeatable and economically viable, and he supported projects related to affordable housing.

Brian Sweeney

Mr. Sweeney, director of the Bethlehem Emergency Shelter, stressed how important these funds are to BES and those served by the shelter, last season resulting in 11,671 bed nights spread among 223 individuals.

Vice President Laird announced that resolution 10 A is on the agenda. The Public Hearing was adjourned at 7:41 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 7, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Krisann Drust-Lustig

Ms. Drust-Lustig presented a petition signed by 85 Litzenberger House residents. The petition raises safety concerns on The Greenway in light of a recent stabbing and an increase in homeless people finding refuge under the pavilion in the 200 block. The petitioners took their concerns to the Bethlehem Housing Authority, which has provided improved lighting and exterior security cameras on the building. The City is urged to expand funding for the Community Connections program to further assist the homeless and help to provide more emergency shelter access to both assist the homeless and restore safety to The Greenway.

David Ruhf

Mr. Ruhf recalled a study of the City's Fire Department operations. He believed the study was to be delivered in June and it is now July. He asked about the status of this study and for public release.

Janet Barry

Ms. Barry raised concerns which she recently discussed with the City's Planning Commission particularly concerning the East Hills section. She noted several planned apartment projects in that area and believes that developers have gained the upper hand. Ms. Barry also lamented the loss of mature trees.

Guill Marc Mariano

Mr. Mariano is a Lehigh University student from the Philippines. He is observing tonight's Council meeting and wants to relate his experiences to officials in his hometown. He would like to see a Sister City relationship between Bethlehem and that town, San Isidro, Isabela.

Rooster Demott

Ms. Demott raised concerns about three Flock Safety cameras within Bethlehem. She said Police Chief Michelle Kott has told her that the City only uses these to read license plates but Ms. Demott said these devices often produce inaccurate identification. She has further worries that the data can be accessed by police officers without reason for suspicion and can be susceptible to data breaches. She urged Council to pass legislation to ban license plate readers or create strict regulations with specified protections including limiting data sharing, limiting data retention time, and limiting usage to serious crime investigations.

Harry Faber

Mr. Faber referred to comments tonight about the homeless and said these are problems deeply rooted in economics. He believes that The Greenway should be open to all. Being homeless does not make a person a threat, and they should not be treated that way.

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola again tried to clarify his position on Jewish people. A resident questioned the appropriateness of this topic. Vice President Laird stated that this has been a familiar theme during recent meetings. The legal opinion has been that, while these views may be offensive or controversial subject matter for some or most, free speech rights permit these comments as long as they do not stray into personal attacks or similar actions. Mr. Curatola continued with his time to state his political views involving leaders in American cities and the Middle East.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics agreed that developers are taking over this city, adding that he has been speaking out on this subject for some time. There is plenty of parking in South Side neighborhoods now because Lehigh University is on summer break, but this only indicates how the student population has taken over. He again urged Council and the Administration to change its definitions in the Zoning Ordinance to limit the number of unrelated residents living in homes.

Terry Kloiber

Ms. Kloiber echoed the concerns regarding the power of developers. She encouraged Council and other City boards to make developers stick to the rules and not grant variances when not required. She reminded of her concern about a proposal to build several apartment buildings of five stories or more on the former Bennett Toyota lot.

Sebastian Zawierucha

Mr. Zawierucha again urged Council to adopt a Welcoming City ordinance. He reminded that about a year ago, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents took 17 workers from Bethlehem, and ICE arrests have continued throughout the United States. He said that the largest opposition to City Council adopting such an ordinance was the fear of retribution from the federal government. Mr. Zawierucha said that Allentown, which passed a similar ordinance, has not experienced backlash.

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

Rooster Demott

Ms. Demott supported resolutions seeking grants to assist the homeless and watershed protection. She also noted the communication concerning changes to strengthen data center regulations. She encouraged placing limits on these facilities.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

5 A. *Rescheduled Time for August 4, 2026 City Council Meeting*

Motion to amend Council meeting time to 5:30 PM for the August 4, 2026 meeting because of Musikfest: Callahan, Kwiatek. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Motion passed.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. *DCED Grants Administrator – Memo – Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) on behalf of Lehigh Valley homeless service providers*

DCED Grants Coordinator Lori Gillo requested authorization to apply for up to \$1.5 million of Emergency Solutions Grant funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. This action would be on behalf of the Lehigh Valley's homelessness service providers. The City would act as a pass-through for this funding. – Item 10 C.

- B. *DCED Grants Coordinator – Memo – Watershed Restoration and Protection Program Grant – PA DCED*

DECD Grants Coordinator Lori Gillio requested authorization to apply for a Watershed Restoration and Protection Program Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. The amount would be up to \$300,000 and would be used to rehabilitate the Stefko Swale. – Item 10 D.

- C. *DCED Grants Coordinator – Memo – Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant – PA DCED*

DCED Grants Coordinator Lori Gillio recommended requested authorization to apply for a Multimodal Transportation Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development. The grant of up to \$3 million would be used for construction in alignment with the Complete streets Plan on Stefko Boulevard. – Item 10 E.

- D. *Director of Planning and Zoning – Memo – Zoning Text Amendment – Data Centers*

Director of Planning and Zoning Cathy Fletcher recommended amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance to address Data Centers. – Referred to the Community Development Committee.

Ms. Laird announced that she is referring this matter to Council's Community and Economic Development Committee as part of a meeting to be held at 6 PM on August 11 in Town

Hall. She emphasized that the existing Zoning Ordinance allows data centers. Discussion would center on imposing restrictions.

E. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – Countryfest*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended executing a Use Permit Agreement with ArtsQuest for Countryfest. – Item 10 F.

F. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center – 2026 LV Pride*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended executing a Use Permit Agreement with the Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center for the 2026 LV Pride. – Item 10 G.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

None

B. *Mayor*

7 B1. Administrative Order – Ian Panyko – Bethlehem Fine Arts Commission

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird,
6. Resolution 2026-120 passed.

7 B2. Administrative Order – Jill Sperandio – Bethlehem Fine Arts Commission

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird,
6. Resolutions 2026-121 passed.

C. *Committee Chairs*

7 C1. Mr. Colón said the Finance Committee met at 6 PM this evening to hear a presentation on the proposed restructuring of existing General Fund debt. Council will be presented with a related Parameters Ordinance for First Reading on August 4. The Committee also reviewed a proposed ordinance involving an adjustment to the Capital Budget for Non-Utilities along with a related resolution to transfer money within the General Fund to pay for the City's portion of matching funds in order to receive the grant for upgrades to traffic signals. Both matters have been forwarded to Council's agenda tonight.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8A. Bill No. 19-2026 – Amendments to Article 1731 and Article 119

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

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF LEHIGH
AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA,
AMENDING ARTICLE 1731 TITLED "INSPECTIONS" AND
AMENDING ARTICLE 119, TITLED "REGISTRATION, SALE AND TRANSFER
OF REAL ESTATE" OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM CODIFIED ORDINANCES.

Mr. Callahan understood that if a renter moved out and a new one moved in, a property would need inspection because the first renter may have done things to alter the safety of the property. But if multiple units would be sold to a new owner, all units should not have to be inspected, he believed.

Chief Building Inspector Michael Simonson said that what is being proposed is inspection at the transfer of ownership of property stage. The change to this ordinance is to expand the time to abate deficiencies from 90 days to one year. The state permits one year, and the proposed changes would bring Bethlehem's ordinances into agreement with the state requirement.

Mr. Callahan used an example in which a 100-unit complex gets inspected. Because it gets sold three months later, it must again be inspected at the time of sale.

Mr. Simonson said that is required. He added that the next date for inspection, unless the complex were to again be sold, would be a full three years later. But, yes, the reinspection three months later would be required.

Mr. Callahan believed this was a means for the City to make money rather than one of necessity.

Mr. Simonson said some instances may be a bit redundant but there is assurance to the new owner and the tenants of a certain level of safety.

Mr. Callahan concluded that a few changed conditions might be caught this way, but he believed it would be unusual. He added that rental rates continue to rise. He anticipated that these inspection costs will be passed along to the rent charged to tenants.

AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 5; NAY: Callahan, 1. Bill No. 19-2026, now known as Ordinance No. 2026-19, passed on Final Reading.

8B. Bill No. 20-2026 – Budget Adjustments – 1 of 2 South Bethlehem Greenway
(S. New-W. Third)

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

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

AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Bill No. 20-2026, now known as Ordinance No. 2026-20, passed on Final Reading.

- 8C. Bill No. 21-2026 – Budget Adjustments – 2 of 2 South Bethlehem Greenway (S. New-W. Third) – Non-Utility Capital Fund

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

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

AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Bill No. 21-2026, now known as Ordinance No. 2026-21, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

- 9A. Bill No. 22-2026 – Amendments to Zoning Ordinance

Sponsors: Amann, Laird. 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”.

AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Bill No. 22-2026 passed on First Reading.

- 9B. Bill No. 23-2026 – Amend Capital Budget for Non-Utilities – Green Light-Go Program

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

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING THE 2026 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES

AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Bill No. 23-2026 passed on First Reading.

10. RESOLUTIONS

- A. *Approve Resolution – 2026 CDBG/HOME – Annual Action Plan – PY2026*

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; Authorized that the City’s Program Year 2026 CDBG Annual Action Plan and its HOME Investment Partnerships Program Annual Action plan are approved for submission to HUD by the Mayor. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Resolution 2026-122 passed.

B. Approve Resolution – Transfer of Funds – General Fund – Green Light-Go Program

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; Authorized that \$70,672 from Account #0502-40001 Salaries (Engineering) and \$71,000 from Account #0503-40001 – Salaries (Streets), totaling \$141,672, be transferred to the General Fund to Account #0801-42083 – Transfer to Non-Utility to provide required matching funds for the Green Light-Go Program grant. Ms. Kwiatek advised that this was the subject of tonight's Finance Committee meeting. Grant funds will help replace the LED lights in all of the City's traffic signals as well as elements in the controlling boxes for each. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Resolution 2026-123 passed.

C. Approve Resolution – Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) on behalf of Lehigh Valley homeless service providers

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; Authorized submission of an ESG grant application from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development on behalf of Lehigh Valley homeless service providers. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Resolution 2026-124 passed.

D. Approve Resolution – Watershed Restoration and Protection Program Grant – PA DCED

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; Authorized submission of a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development for the rehabilitation of the Stefko Swale. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Resolution 2026-125 passed.

E. Approve Resolution – Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant – PA DCED

Sponsors: Amann, Laird; Authorized submission of a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to be used for construction in alignment with the Complete Streets Plan on Stefko Boulevard. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Resolution 2026-126 passed.

F. Approve Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – Countryfest

Amann, Laird; Authorized agreement with ArtsQuest to execute a Use Permit Agreement for Countryfest. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6; Resolution 2026-127 passed.

G. Approve Use Permit Agreement – Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center – 2026 LV Pride

Amann, Laird; Authorized agreement with the Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center to execute a Use Permit Agreement for 2026 LV Pride. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6; Resolution 2026-128 passed.

Motion to combine Items 10 H through 10 J: Colón, Kwiatek. AYE: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Motion passed.

H. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 443 Center Street to replace the existing bluestone and slate sidewalk, in front of the home, that is deteriorating, with brushed concrete while

maintaining the brick border alongside the sidewalk closest to the fence and installing landscape lighting at the rear of the patio;

I. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 446 Main Street to install a new 16-foot-wide by 2-foot-high aluminum sign to the existing plywood backer for Main Street Real Estate Group and vinyl film window decals for Main Street Real Estate Group and the Gallery and Fine Arts store; and

J. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB 55 East Church Street to replace the existing 7-foot-high vertical cedar wood slat and lattice fence with a 6-foot-high vertical cedar wood slat fence.

Sponsors: Amann, Laird AYE for 10 H through 10 J: Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, 6. Resolutions 2026-129 through 2026-131 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 9:03 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk