

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
10 East Church Street - Town Hall  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, March 5, 2024 - 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

President Colón called the meeting to order. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Grace Crampsie Smith, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Colleen S. Laird, Rachel Leon, Kiera L. Wilhelm, and Michael G. Colón, 7.

President Colón said he would invite a motion to move up the President's Report to be the next agenda item this evening. Ms. Wilhelm made a motion, seconded by Mr. Callahan, to move the President's Report to the next item of business on tonight's agenda.

Voting AYE: Ms. Laird, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 7. Motion approved.

7 A. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Colón thanked Council for moving this item because the matter to be discussed likely is the reason that many of the people who have filled Town Hall are here. He asked that all show each other respect in this matter. He expected that there will likely be opposing views expressed tonight. President Colón said there has been much discussion among Council Members since the last meeting to try to determine the best course of action and the content of that action. Public comments from the past meeting were taken into account, and conversations were had with elected officials at higher levels. He noted that Congresswoman Susan Wild signed on to a letter with her colleagues to encourage the United States to redouble its efforts and act with urgency to use whatever influence the United State has to try to find peace to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Also in the last two weeks, President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have been public and direct in their remarks as to our country's wishes for an end to the violence. City Council recognizes all of these actions in the times that passed since the public was heard during City Council's February 20 meeting. Council feels that efforts are being made at the federal level to address concerns in the Middle East. Council supports continued action at the federal level for the U.S. government to use all of its influence to act with urgency to help broker peace. He read the following draft letter from City Council addressed to elected federal officials:

Dear \_\_,

We, members of Bethlehem City Council, having heard our constituents and feeling a responsibility to amplify their voices, write to you in recognition of your leadership and the power of your influence with respect to issues of national and international importance. Specifically, we implore your action with respect to humanitarian crises around the globe, and particularly, the

October 7th attacks by Hamas and subsequent violence in Israel and the Gaza Strip.

We have received significant constituent input on the matter. Notwithstanding their diverse range of understanding and opinions regarding the roots of this historical conflict and appropriate pathways to resolution, citizens from all corners of our city are united in grief over the tens of thousands of civilian lives lost in this conflict. At the same time, our local community has been scarred by a rise in expressions of antisemitism and Islamophobia since October 7th.

We recognize and appreciate Congresswoman Susan Wild's letter to President Biden, and the Administration's recent efforts to provide aid to the region and bring an end to the violence. As the suffering continues and more lives are lost, we urge you to continue to leverage your power and international influence to secure the immediate entry and safe distribution of critical humanitarian assistance into Gaza; to facilitate the immediate and safe release of all hostages taken in the course of the conflict; to help facilitate the defeat of terrorism and an end to the violent conflict in Gaza; and to contribute to efforts towards lasting peace in the region.

We call for you to take an active role in forging a path to lasting peace and justice around the world, where societies can live freely and safely, and individuals can realize their full human potential. Please act with urgency and use the power and influence of this great nation to protect civilian lives from violent conflict, to bring humanitarian assistance to those in need, and to encourage a culture of peace and respect across the globe and here at home.

Only by taking action can you demonstrate your commitment to the notion that all human life, all races, ethnicities, and religions, are valued; and to underscore that acts of terror targeting civilians are violations of international humanitarian law and will neither be tolerated nor supported.

Sincerely,

President Colón concluded said his remarks provide background as to the activity of City Council in the past two weeks and the action that Council has chosen to take. He said he would continue with the regular agenda, which will eventually get to Public Comment.

#### PUBLIC HEARING

President Colón stated that prior to the consideration of the regular Agenda items, City Council will conduct a Public Hearing to accept public comment on the request for the intermunicipal transfer of restaurant liquor license No. R-13866 obtained in September of 2023 in

an auction conducted by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board by Aramark Sports and Entertainment Services, LLC for a new restaurant at Wind Creek Casino, 77 Wind Creek Boulevard, Bethlehem, Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

President Colón called the Public Hearing to order and stated he will now recognize a representative from the applicant to address this matter.

Ellen Freeman, Esquire, of Flaherty & O'Hara of Pittsburgh, represents Aramark Sports & Entertainment, LLC, which seeks to transfer a liquor license from the PLCB to 77 Wind Creek Boulevard. This would be space previously used for the hotel lobby at Wind Creek Casino and at the entrance to the outlets stores. This area will be remodeled to become a restaurant. An early 2025 opening is anticipated. Hours of operation would be 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM daily. Aramark has more than 20 liquor licenses in Pennsylvania and has experience in how to operate in a safe manner. All associates working in their restaurants will be certified under the Responsible Alcohol Management Program as well as the company's internal training to ensure the safe and proper sale of alcohol. Ian McCabe, Aramark's Vice President of Growth, also was present to answer questions.

*Council Comment:*

None.

*Public Comment:*

None.

President Colón announced that Resolution 10 A is on the agenda for tonight and adjourned the Public Hearing at 7:16 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 20, 2024

3.

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

*Working Toward Housing Needs*

Anna Smith, Director of Community Action Development of Bethlehem, said the biggest concerns that she has heard in her role is housing quality and the affordability crisis. Both issues are being faced by many cities, but Bethlehem is different in that it is dealing with the situation. This community is special because its members care to help others. The City is working with partners to work toward forming a strategy to deal with these needs with several programs under the City's Opening Doors initiative.

*Recommended Changes to Opening Doors*

Resident Susan Haytmanek agreed with Ms. Smith's comments but said she did not address neighborhoods. She is concerned with a proposed housing solution that plans for 320 apartments on a small property in the middle of a neighborhood that is well established. This is the "warehousing" of people and she does not like that these will be rental properties. She believes that Opening Doors recommendations that call for multi-level, high-density housing with homes that can be purchased by residents as entry-level homes are not appropriate at this location. She also suggested repurposing some unused industrial space to build homes for the homeless. She asked Council to "respect the character of our City and the quality of our neighborhoods."

*Support the Ceasefire Resolution*

Mohammed Khaku of Allentown urged Council to approve a ceasefire Resolution. He said genocide by Israeli-occupying forces and the Zionist Israel has no right of defense as an occupier, according to the United Nations charter.

*Return Our Community*

Resident Carlos Diaz spoke of the need for affordable housing. He recalled family neighborhoods on the South Side in the 1980s. This was a community. Today, much of the South Side has been taken over by Lehigh University students and their loud parties and bad behavior. Additionally, we see luxury housing that contains people with no stake in the community. This forces out affordable housing and people willing to put down generational roots. We have lost the sense of community that he grew up with. He encouraged Council to take no what is right, adding, "There is no more just cause than affordable housing."

*Dying Wish*

Annisa Amatul read the last words of Aaron Bushnell, an active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force when he protested genocide before committing suicide by setting himself afire. His wish was for a day when his ashes could be scattered in a free Palestine, but would not want them scattered before that day arrives.

*Alternate Resolution Offered*

Drew Swedberg, represents Lehigh Valley Artists for a Free Palestine, supported the efforts for affordable housing. He also said that he was looking forward to the carefully worded Resolution that was anticipated after Council's meeting. He added that several of those present support offering another proposed Resolution that is based on similar language adopted by more than 50 cities across America on this subject. Mr. Swedberg said he wished there were more time to calmly discuss this approach of offering an alternate Resolution but there is not enough time because of the death and destruction in Gaza. They ask for a permanent ceasefire now so that aid can safely be delivered.

President Colón said it is within City Council's Rules and because of the state Sunshine Law that Council cannot vote on this alternate Resolution tonight. This cannot be added to

tonight's agenda to be voted on. The public has not been advised that this action would be voted on and afforded public comment. These are procedural norms.

*Historic Perspective*

Resident Raya Abdelaal said she is from Palestine. She told the story of her family being chased from their homes in 1948 and in years since. She emphasized that the genocide did not start recently, but dates to 1948. She looks forward to the day when 14 million Palestinians worldwide, along with their allies, liberate their homeland.

*Don't Remain Silent*

Resident Cory Fischer Hoffman identified herself as a member of Jewish organizations and offered strong support for a ceasefire Resolution. She said in the 1940s Bethlehem City Council remained silent, as did many, during the Holocaust. She sees this happening again within the past five months. Passing a ceasefire Resolution is not anti-Semitic.

*Support Alternat Resolution*

Resident Josy Irizarry presented the alternate Resolution that Mr. Swedberg referenced earlier in the meeting. She said Council failed on its promise to draft its own Resolution on time. Council said it would not vote on Mr. Callahan's proposed Resolution on February 20 because it wanted more time to thoughtfully draft its Resolution. She said that this offered language gives Council something to approve. Time is of the essence.

*Changes Sought to Regulated Rentals*

Resident Jo Daniels returned to speak about severe maintenance and safety issues at 71-73 East Broad Street. There have been no repairs made since the January 10, 2024 inspection. Violations were found by the City including a leaking roof. A citation was issued on February 5. She asked why a tenant that has filed a complaint with the City has to experience delay in receiving the findings of the inspection. She is requesting the assistance of a City Council Member to help make changes that provide full disclosures to tenants. According to Article 1739.04, a copy of the lease is to be given to the City for a regulated rental. Ms. Daniels has read the lease by this management company and said that it violates the Warranty of Habitability Law set forth by the Attorney General of Pennsylvania. She said residential rentals are only required to have inspections every three years. She believes this is why some renters are living in poor and unsafe conditions because there is "little to no oversight on the part of the City." There needs to be better oversight by the City and mandatory educational requirements of landlords.

President Colón suggested that Ms. Daniels contact the City Clerk's Office to initiate contact.

*False Claims*

Resident Carol Baylor identified herself as a member of Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern. She said there have been sensation false claims of atrocities to help Israel justify a war of revenge. She supports a ceasefire.

*Projections Offered*

Lehigh student Lizzie Hayes discussed a recent Johns Hopkins report on the crisis in Gaza health report world impact projections. An immediate and permanent ceasefire would also bring humanitarian aid. Between February 7 and August 6, 11,580 people will die if a ceasefire is reached, 66,720 will die under the status quo, and 85,750 will die if there is an escalation of fighting, the study said. The status quo scenario includes what is called for in the Susan Wild letter, so this is not acceptable to Ms. Hayes.

*Pressure is Working*

Lehigh student Ciaran Buitrayo said that Council on February 20 promised to draft and vote on a ceasefire Resolution during tonight's visit. Instead, the letter introduced by President Colón at the beginning of this meeting does not go far enough. It does not call for a permanent ceasefire. Seventy other cities have passed ceasefire Resolutions. This is working. It is pressuring federal officials to act.

*End the Cycles of Violence*

Nadine Clopton said "calling for a permanent ceasefire is not anti-Semitic, it is a doorway." She called for ending the cycles of violence now.

*Take a Stand*

Jacque Irizarry believes in equality for all. She said we cannot allow the Israeli government to continue to kill Palestinians. We must take a stand on what is right and what is wrong. The time is now to act before more die.

*Letter More Appropriate*

Aaron Gorodzinsky outlined the "complexity of issues" that does not make this an open-and-shut, simple matter for Council to propose a ceasefire Resolution. He said Council would be setting a precedent. There are more than 65 international conflicts. He urged Council not to respond to only this one. He appreciates the letter that was read by Council earlier in the meeting and finds this a more appropriate action.

*Accept Offers for Peace*

Vicky Wax said we should not tell the people of Israel what to do and how to protect their children. We have no idea what the reality is of the people who live there. She read a letter of January 28, 2024 from Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid who said it is time to get rid of the Palestinian leaders and accept Israel's offers for peace.

*Let Local Boards Deal with Local Issues*

Robert Wax, President of the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley, argued against City Council approving a ceasefire Resolution. While it has been stated that 70 cities have supported similar measures, he pointed out that 99.7 percent of municipalities have not done so. While

everyone wants peace in the Middle East, these issues are beyond the scope and jurisdiction of City Council. It should remain focused on the local issues on tonight's agenda. If those in the crowd are unhappy with our federal government's position on the conflict in Gaza, they should contact our federal legislators and stop creating distractions at municipal meetings.

*Do Not Support a Ceasefire Resolution*

Amy Fels said Israel has a right to defend itself against Hamas. Because the International Court of Justice has ruled that Israel is not committing genocide, she believes that Council should trust its judgement and not approve a ceasefire Resolution. Those demanding a ceasefire should focus on demanding the release of hostages and dismantling of Hamas so there actually could be a ceasefire. Many speakers have said they do not want their tax dollars going to support the Middle East conflict, but she wondered why these same people are silent when it comes to the atrocities that Russia is inflicting on Ukraine. She asked why there are no protests for a Russian ceasefire. She said the reason for the difference is because this war involves Israel, Jewish people, and anti-Semitism. To vote for the ceasefire would be to enable the 76-year-old war.

*Stop Funding Genocide*

Lehigh student Claire Fernandez said the majority of people in the world do not view current events in the Middle East as war or a conflict. This is Israel killing Palestinian civilians. This is a genocide. We need to stop funding this genocide. She demanded a ceasefire.

*Another Nazi Germany?*

Harry Fabor compared the Israeli occupation forces' killings to Nazi Germany. He was dismayed that there is no ceasefire Resolution on tonight's agenda.

*Ceasefire Not the Answer*

Harry Shleifer is not totally against a ceasefire, but he said Hamas is a lethal, extremist, Islamic group, much the same as ISIS was or the Taliban. Until October 6, 2023, there was a ceasefire since 2021. History tells us these ceasefires have been broken in the past. He believes that a ceasefire will just be a pause in which Hamas reloads to continue its death and destruction on another day.

*Take No Action*

Ruthie Shleifer does not believe that a Resolution that would deal with any foreign policy position would be appropriate at the City Council level. She instead urged citizens to contact their Congressmen and Senators. She added that Bethlehem is home to those from many religions and cultures. We should never take actions or make statements that would wound others in our community. Ms. Shleifer urged that Council take no action.

*U.S. Representatives Do Not Respond*

A woman who identified herself only as Hannah demanded a Resolution for a ceasefire. She said Council agreed to draft and vote on a ceasefire Resolution presumable at this meeting.

Since there is no Resolution to be considered on tonight's agenda, she concluded that these were merely words. She and others have come again tonight to press their point. She added that they have been contacting their federal officials, but they have generally heard nothing in response so they are bringing this to local government.

*Follow Through*

Valerie Noonan referred to a news article about recent protests before Bethlehem and Allentown City Councils. The article further said that Bethlehem Council Members could not reach agreement on language for a proposed ceasefire Resolution, so none was presented. It quoted Mr. Callahan as saying that there was positive movement toward a ceasefire in the meantime and added the belief that the protestors' goal was reached in that the local pressure was heard by the federal representatives. Ms. Noonan said that was not the goal complete goal of the activists. A Resolution should not be tabled because there are people talking about "maybe having a ceasefire temporarily for six weeks." She said that Council was supportive of receiving input from the activists and added that the draft Resolution that was read aloud tonight was emailed to Council.

*Return the Hostages*

Irvin Kapler said that Hamas releasing the hostages would be a start toward working things out. He added that you cannot have a Resolution that condemns one side when there are things on both sides that makes peace harder to come by. He commends Council for taking a more neutral position.

*Where is the Resolution?*

Tommy Parisi said Council "fell through" from its stated support of an intended ceasefire Resolution. He asked why a Resolution is not on tonight's agenda. He additionally wanted to know why it would not be possible to vote on the Resolution proposed by some in the audience tonight.

A man from the audience called out a point of order.

President Colón said he did not recognize the point of order. He has already explained that, under Council Rules, a Resolution cannot simply be proposed and voted upon. It must be on the agenda.

*Suspend the Rules*

John Irons stated that a "middle ground to world peace" is inadequate. The open letter approach has not worked. He also views this as a genocide. This is not stopped by wishing for peace. Instead, this is stopped by standing in solidarity. A Resolution may not carry political weight, but it clarifies to businesses, political parties, and to residents that City Council will not enable genocide. He also suggested divesting in police training by the IDF and to ensure that public contracts do not funnel public money to Israeli companies. Mr. Irons said that simple letters of protest normalize the actions that they purport to speak against. He urged Council to suspend its rules, make a motion to debate the proposed Resolution, and vote.

*Time of the Essence*

A woman who identified herself only as Gazal said this is an urgent situation as people are dying daily. She calculated the number who have died in the two weeks that have passed since this was last discussed on February 20.

*Senseless Killing*

A DeSales University woman identified as Amera said a nonprofit organization that supports disabled persons was bombed and destroyed. She asked the purpose of destroying an organization that helps disabled children.

*Stay Out of Foreign Policy*

Resident Ben Felzer believes that City Council should not be making pronouncements about foreign policy over which we have no control. He also asked why Gaza should be singled out and not other world conflicts including Ukraine. It would also set a biased and unwelcoming message to many in the Bethlehem Jewish community if the City takes sides in this very complicated conflict by trying to frame it in very simple terms. Mr. Felzer pointed out that Council has not passed a Resolution on any issue on foreign affairs in the past. This would set a bad precedent. We also do not have accurate intelligence on which to base our actions.

*No Role in Foreign Policy*

Rabbi Steven Nathan believes that both the Palestinians and Israelis deserve to have a homeland and to live in peace. The shape that that would take depends on their leaders who must follow the will of the people. A Resolution in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania plays no role in this. He believes that Israel had a right to defend itself, but this fighting has gone too far and must end. Bethlehem City Council has no power and in no way is connected to the war in between Israel and Hamas. They have never been involved in international affairs nor should they be. He implored Council not to pass any Resolution today.

*Timing is Critical*

Sarah Zanasarik supports the Palestinian plight and a ceasefire Resolution. She spoke of timing and its meaning in poetry and timing and its meaning in life. In this case, slow or no action toward providing a ceasefire Resolution is costing lives. She urged quick action.

*Supports Two-State Solution*

Resident Mary Jo Makoul noted there was no ceasefire Resolution on tonight's agenda. She emailed her concerns to Council and the Mayor. She asked if those supporting a ceasefire in Gaza also would support a two-state solution. If not, she said they are no better than Israel as they, too, are promoting genocide. She cited 911 and Pearl Harbor and wondered whether those demanding the ceasefire would have supported our country's response to these two events involving the United States or rather have had this country do nothing to respond.

*Don't Let Hamas Regroup*

Ved Dookhun, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for state Senate, believes that a ceasefire would allow Hamas to regroup and carry out its murderous program. He said this is not just terrorism but a program of hate against Jews.

*Pressure Begins Locally*

Another female speaker named Amera who did not provide her last name said the Council has been silent, but they were not elected to remain silent. She has heard the same reservations from other Lehigh Valley municipalities about passing a permanent ceasefire Resolution saying that this is not a local issue and distracts from other domestic issues. She says groups like hers cannot meet with President Biden or Congress, but they can come to local city councils. She said the refusal to see Palestine as a local and intersectional issue is grounds for people to start judging Council Members' intelligence. She also believes that Bethlehem could use some of the federal tax money being sent to support Israel. She believes local Resolutions have an impact and signal messages of discontent regarding U.S. foreign policy. Arab constituents believe that failure to call for peace is divisive to them.

*Send a Message*

Logan Michael Scheirer of Palmerton supports the ceasefire Resolution. He said he does not speak in Palmerton because similar social justice protests have not been favorably received but he said he and others will not be driven out of making their comments in Bethlehem, Allentown, or Easton. He opposes our federal tax money being sent to Israel, a country that has been found partially guilty of committing genocide by the International Court of Justice. This is not the City's budget money, but Bethlehem could send a message to state and federal officials that this is not supported. The letter seeking peace if appropriate, but a Resolution calling for a ceasefire is additionally appropriate. Mr. Scheirer added that the atrocities committed by Hamas are terrible, but Israel has committed 20 times that number.

*Ceasefire Would Deny Israel Right to Defend Itself*

Eric Zaiger said reports of the number of deaths and casualties in Gaza are not accurate and cannot be trusted because they are reported by the Gaza Health Ministry that is run by Hamas. Other factors lead to propaganda and other inaccuracies. He asked why the world would not want Jews to have this one sliver of land called Israel. Those who are against Israel's existence are anti-Semitic. To vote in favor of a ceasefire in Gaza is to deny Israel the right to defend itself and its land.

*United States Bears Responsibility*

Resident Naomi Fossa was disappointed to learn that Council did not submit a proposed Resolution for consideration in time for this meeting as promised. As expected, things have only gotten worse since. This underscores the urgency of supporting the ceasefire. Many believe that the United States is not responsible for events in Gaza. But the aid being sent and United Nations votes bears responsibility. She encouraged Council to draft and approve a ceasefire Resolution.

*Resolution and Divestiture*

Khatlyn Hart recently gave birth and realized how fortunate she was compared to those similarly doing so or dying of hunger and other maladies of war. She appreciated Council's intended letter urging peace but also urged members to pass the ceasefire Resolution and divestiture.

*Free the Hostages*

Billy Minor said he knows everyone wants peace. We are all horrified by events in Gaza. Everyone wants a ceasefire. Since this is obvious, he focused on the more than 100 hostages in Gaza and include them in any future declarations. Demand peace but first demand that the hostages be released by Hamas.

*Hope for Peace*

Resident Arthur Curatola agreed with freeing the hostages and hope for a ceasefire. He introduced himself as one of the hosts of Wake Up, Rise Up, Live for Peace, a 24-hour, once-a-year podcast that is an international peace concert. He said the world needs to understand how states came together to become the United States. All the states had differences of opinion but they united. This could be the case in the Middle East. War is not the answer. We need to live together.

*Why Not Consider Alternate Resolution?*

Resident Lauren Gilmore asked President Colón about Council procedures. She noted that Mr. Callahan at the last meeting made a motion about passing a ceasefire Resolution that was seconded and eventually voted down. The rationale was that Council wanted more time to discuss and draft a more precise Resolution. She asked how that process was different than the Resolution that some in the audience proposed tonight.

President Colón responded that this is the public's opportunity to provide comment but that he would try to make it a point to clarify her question under New Business.

Someone else from the audience loudly called for a point of order and said Council could put a Resolution on the agenda tonight.

President Colón said he does not acknowledge the point of order and that he would allow Ms. Gilmore to continue her comments, if she wished to.

Ms. Gilmore hoped this matter would be clarified. She also asked that Council consider the possibility to suspend the rule prohibiting consideration of the Resolution provided by the audience.

*Common Goal*

A resident who did not provide her name said talk about the hostage release is valid. She pointed out that the alternate Resolution calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the

hostages. Although some may feel that those offering this alternate Resolution are not on the same side as Council, they really are.

### *History of Fear*

Rabbi Allen Israel Juda has been retired for about 10 years and speaks for himself. He is a proponent of a two-state solution. He wishes for a Palestinian state with their own chosen leaders. He is not a fan of the current or some previous leaders in Israel. He said there is a history of Jews living in fear. All they want is this one country to live. They want to live in peace and prosperity and not be subjected to anti-Semitism and violence.

### *Complex Issue*

A Lafayette College student who identified herself only as Ariel termed herself a proud anti-Zionist Jew. Her family passed down stories of the Holocaust and taught the concept of "never again." They have been taught never to allow another genocide to happen again. The attack did not begin on October 7, 2023. Events led up to it since Israel invaded Palestine in 1948. Zionists believe that since Jews have endured this for so long, they deserve a homeland to call their own and that will ensure self-determination and safety. But this does not exist in a vacuum. Jew deserve safety, but this does not mean that other people's rights should come at the expense of that. She said this is an illegal occupation. She called on Council to adopt a ceasefire Resolution.

### *Bethlehem History*

Resident Stephen Antalics offered history that is unknown to many. Bethlehem was founded on religious discrimination. The residents of the Borough of South Bethlehem primarily were emigrants from Central Europe and were harshly looked down upon by Bethlehem residents. South Bethlehem became quite prosperous because it had industry. Meanwhile, Bethlehem struggled because it did not. A union between the two was attempted, but those in South Bethlehem rejected this effort. It wasn't until 1917 when Charles Schwab of Bethlehem Steel facilitated the merger of the boroughs as a city that this was achieved. Mr. Antalics said all that happened after the merger favored the North Side.

### *Disappointed by No Resolution*

A Lehigh University student who identified herself only as Meg said she celebrated a win two weeks ago when she heard Council say that is would support a ceasefire Resolution. She said those against a ceasefire support a genocidal government. She urged Council to make a wise decision and support a ceasefire Resolution.

### *Put Tax Money to Good Use*

A Lehigh student who identified herself only as Daha raised concerns about the United States financially supporting Israel to commit war crimes against Palestine. She also discussed affordable housing and said the two issues are tied in that people should have a safe place that they can call home. She said the money being sent to support Israel should be put toward improving the affordable housing crisis. She also said that two-state solutions do not work, pointing to East and West Germany, Korea, Vietnam, etc.

*College Students Committed*

Lehigh student Sarah Stevens noted the many college students present and at a late hour proves how much they care. They will continue to rally, make speeches, and attend Council meetings when necessary to voice their concerns, including on Election Day.

*Council Should Focus on Local Issues*

Resident James Follweiler was amused that some members of Council said they are proud and liked the participation of the college students and community members and were glad to hear their comments. For the majority of his time observing Council meetings, residents' input is ignored on topics such as the Walnut Street Garage, the "white box", historical standards, and the budget. He found it interesting that two-thirds of the people who spoke tonight are not residents yet Council is so interested. He turned his comments to working toward peace, noting that terrible things happened on both sides of this conflict. Mr. Follweiler commended speakers on both sides of the argument for stating their beliefs, but he agreed with others who have said that no one has asked Council for similar actions when it comes to Ukraine for example. He urged Council not to make public proclamations and statements on foreign matters. This takes away precious time on matters involving our City and its residents.

*Recommends Armed Escorts for Those Providing Aid*

Resident William Scheirer said calling for a ceasefire is not going to accomplish anything. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu already has rejected calls for a ceasefire. He believes the United States should disregard Mr. Netanyahu and can do so by providing armed escorts for those providing humanitarian aid to Gaza. This would, in effect, be a ceasefire.

*Not Surprised*

A woman only identifying herself as Amel that she was not shocked that Council did not provide a ceasefire Resolution for this meeting. She distributed pictures of children who she said died in the two weeks following the February 20 Council meeting.

*Put Pressure on Federal Officials*

A woman whose name was inaudible said that no one here believes that the direct action by Council would do something in another Council. But they believe that Council must do more than see that potholes get filled. Federal representatives are not listening, so speakers have been asking for Council to get their attention.

*Spend Tax Money Here*

A speaker who did not provide her name supported affordable housing efforts. They also condemned anti-Semitic actions. It was also noted that Pennsylvania tax money was put into Israeli government bonds in addition to more than \$95 billion being sent toward weaponry to arm foreign military operations.

*Argument for Defense Is Over*

Resident Gabby Hochfeld said the argument for defense by Israel is over. This has become hateful, inhumane and pure cruelty. She wants Bethlehem to be a part of stopping this. She urged Council to pass a ceasefire Resolution.

*Represent Constituents*

A man whose name was inaudible but identified himself as a City taxpayer said he was born in China. He believes that Council is not doing what the people want, both with the Walnut Street Garage and approving a ceasefire Resolution. He supports a ceasefire Resolution.

*Stop Sending Taxpayer Money Abroad*

A resident who identified herself as Nicole and as a Lehigh student said that it is not true that only people who care about Palestine are showing up. She said she is here to speak in favor of a ceasefire and housing affordability. These are both local issues, and we can care about two things at once. When she was 15, her family's home was nearly foreclosed upon. She credits friends with lending her parents the money to see their way through the emergency. Not everyone has this advantage. She reasoned that if taxpayer money were not sent abroad to fund military operations, there would be more money to help fund affordable housing initiatives. Still, the affordable housing crisis pales in comparison with the death and destruction going on in the Middle East. She urged a swift approval of a ceasefire Resolution.

*Evidence Exists*

A Muhlenberg College student who did not provide her name said she is struggling emotionally from seeing deadly images in Gaza. She said it cannot be true that Hamas has made up stories. She is convinced by videos, pictures, and live-streams as evidence. She said that Council is enabling the situation by not calling for a ceasefire.

*Help Get Federal Officials' Attention*

A Lafayette College student named Asim said that many have called or emailed federal representatives, but they have been ignored. This makes them feel like they do not matter. He again called on Council to get the attention of state and federal officials for them by passing the ceasefire Resolution.

*Support for Council*

Resident Delia Marrero thanked Council for its continued work to improve the community. She said she is here tonight to discuss affordable housing locally. No one can address this issue alone, so conversations are important. It will take a coalition to bring together all of the voices of City residents. She concluded by saying that what was being discussed tonight was very emotional, but it does not give anyone the right to disrespect anyone else.

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

*Question about Storm Water Budget Increase*

Resident Mary Jo Makoul said she expressed her disapproval last fall of the City real estate tax increase as well as a rise in sewer fees. She saw on tonight's agenda an increase in the Storm Water Budget. Ms. Makoul asked for an explanation of what projects this involves.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

President Colón said he would address the question asked earlier as to why the audience-proposed Resolution would not be considered this evening. He said that Council's Solicitor could speak to when Council could add items to the agenda without advertising. He said this was worth mentioning at the February meeting but it was not mentioned, so it is being addressed at this meeting.

Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward noted that there was a call this evening for Council to suspend its rules and vote on the audience-offered Resolution tonight. That is not possible. It actually is a matter of Commonwealth statute and the Sunshine Act, specifically § 709 which requires that matters of a Council meeting must be published in an agenda prior to the meeting. And, § 712.1 says that an agency may not take action on a matter if the matter has not been included in the required notification. This is true tonight for the audience-offered Resolution. It was also true two weeks ago when there was a motion made and seconded for a Council-offered Resolution.

An audience member said that if Council is going to fail to pass a Resolution tonight, then the audience will pass one themselves. She made a motion to pass a Resolution. She began to read the audience-proposed Resolution.

President Colón said that was not how this works.

This led to loud chants of "Ceasefire now" by many in the audience.

President Colón banged the gavel several times to try to maintain order and called for "order in Council Chambers." As chants continued, he banged the gavel again several times and tried to regain control by stating that Council would continue with business on the agenda.

Police Chief Kott and several officers attempted to reason with those chanting to regain order, but to no avail.

After one minute of chanting, Ms. Crampsie Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Ms. Leon.

Voting AYE: Ms. Laird, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 7. Motion approved.

The meeting was adjourned 12:04 AM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller  
City Clerk