

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, December 2, 2025 - 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

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

President Colón announced that Ms. Wilhelm is traveling and will not be attending tonight, Mayor Reynolds will not be present, and Business Administrator Eric Evans is ill but is participating via GoTo Meeting. He also noted the November 20 budget meeting that lasted nearly eight hours and the upcoming December 4 meeting that will deal with proposed budget amendments. The public would be free to discuss whatever City-related business they wish during tonight's Public Comment portion but he asked Council members to reserve budget-related comments for Thursday's amendment meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 18, 2025

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Budget Comments

Resident Mike O'Hare has followed budget hearings online. He is pleased that the City is in a healthy financial position and is paying down debt. He believed Controller George Yasso made a good point about the \$10 million that was received over several years that was unexpected, some unbudgeted. Council was unaware that this money was available. He saw no impropriety but believed this situation should change. Mr. O'Hare also agreed with the premise that ongoing expenditures should not be paid by one-time funding such as grants. But he thought it was contradictory that the Department of Community and Economic Development is 96 percent funded by grants and fees. Additionally, he has heard that the Fire Department roster is eight people short. He would like to see these positions filled but would like that done in conjunction with an objective study if that shows an increase is justified. Finally, he agreed with a Council comment that Council should have more involvement in the process of granting Community Recovery Fund money in the interest of transparency.

Water Rate Increase Contingency

Resident Mark Will-Weber again urged Council to not grant any water rate increase until assurance is given that customers would be offered downloadable apps to monitor their usage and most notably indicate leaks or other unusual heavy usage that would lead to high bills. Director of Water and Sewer Resources Edward Boscola recently stated that the City would be approaching the Public Utility Commission in the near future to request a water rate increase.

Low Staffing is Inexcusable

Resident Michael Liberto said low staffing of the Fire Department is unsafe and inexcusable. This is unfair to the firefighters and the residents they protect. He has heard about assisting with affordable housing and the homeless for three years but sees nothing in place and blamed the Mayor's leadership.

Environmental Advisory Council Report

Lynn Rothman provided the annual Environmental Advisory Council report. The EAC's most important work is supporting the Climate Action Plan. She cited several efforts throughout 2025, such as providing a survey to area restaurants on ways to reduce plastic waste. The updated Subdivision and Land Use Ordinance now requires that development plans be submitted to the EAC for review, which this year totaled 16.

President Colón stated the Ms. Rothman will be retiring from her role as chair and member of the EAC at the end of this year. He thanked her for her extensive efforts.

Increase Staffing

Lou Jimenez, firefighters' union president, said low staffing levels have been documented for more than 15 years. Adding four firefighters and amending the budget is not extravagant. This would be a critical and long-overdue first step. At least eight more firefighters are needed, but this would be a good-faith start. The union and Administration have collaborated on many issues but this has not been a success when it comes to staffing. He urged the City to apply for SAFER grants that would pay a portion of the pay of new firefighters' salaries and benefits. He contended that the firefighters are not taken seriously unless there is no cost.

Encampments Update Sought

Resident Robert Virgilio asked for an update on the announced intention to evict the homeless from encampments along the railroad tracks.

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

President Colón announced that six proposed amendments have been received for the 2026 budget necessitating holding a meeting at 6 PM on December 4. He reminded that the Second Reading/Enactment of the budget will take place at 7 PM on December 16. President Colón updated an inquiry made last meeting by Ms. Crampsie Smith concerning Council's Conflict of Interest Ordinance. Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward issued a legal opinion "that there is a disconnect between the stated purposes of our ordinance as is set forth in the whereas clauses in the beginning of the ordinance and the definitions section and the conduct proscribed thereunder." The ordinance limits proscribed conduct only to voting, and the definition of City official does not align with the sections stating to whom the ordinance applies. Council could consider amendments to address the inconsistencies in the ordinance in place. Solicitor Steward recommended using the state Ethics Act as a guiding statute in these areas. This already applies to all but could be added for emphasis and consistency. Amendments could be brought before Council.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan asked whether the police have an update on a shooting the second week in November by the football fields.

Deputy Chief Scott Meixell said he had nothing new to report.

Mr. Callahan agreed with Mr. Liberto that Mayor Reynolds needs to be held accountable for the budget and funding choices.

Ms. Crampsie Smith

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked for clarification on the procedure to amend the Conflict of Interest ordinance. She believed that proposed amendments would be reviewed by the Committee of the Whole.

President Colón said it could be done either at a Committee meeting or regular Council meeting.

Ms. Crampsie Smith believed that review by the Committee of the Whole might offer more time for discussion.

Ms. Crampsie Smith also expressed that this is a particularly busy time of year and there is a lot going on with Public Safety issues. She believed the Mayor should be present for more of these meetings.

Ms. Crampsie Smith additionally asked for an update on the intended eviction of the homeless. She was told that date will be December 15, which will be before Council's next meeting.

Deputy Chief Meixell said the police have been working with Norfolk Southern and several groups to inform those living there of the deadline to leave. They have been advised of services being offered.

Ms. Leon

Ms. Leon asked Solicitor Steward whether Council could make water rate increases contingent on the City offering smart meters, as Mr. Will-Weber suggested.

Solicitor Steward said normally if a fee is being imposed, it should be based on the cost of the service. If the service includes service for an app, it should be factored in.

President Colón believed this question previously was discussed. The answer was that a creatively written ordinance could be drafted but he added that, traditionally, a rate increase has been tied to an operational need as the cost of doing business rises.

Solicitor Steward said depending on the specific ideas offered, she would have to research whether they could be incorporated.

Ms. Leon further asked about potential amendments offered to the Conflict of Interest ordinance. She suggested that any amendments could be evaluated to determine whether a Committee of the Whole meeting would be more suitable than a standard Council meeting.

Ms. Leon also noted the recent tense budget meetings and urged all that it is possible to advocate for our communities based on the merit, not based on anything else, and without downgrading others.

Ms. Laird

Ms. Laird asked Deputy Chief Meixell about intended enforcement details of the eviction of the homeless.

Chief Meixell said Bethlehem police officers will be present with Norfolk Southern police. Community Contact personnel will assist also. It is hoped that all will be connected with services to assist them.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan asked Fire Chief Matthew Griffin for an update on a request for the number of service calls to nonprofits such as the universities and Lehigh Valley Hospital-Muhlenberg.

Chief Griffin said that information was sent to the Clerk. (Editor's Note: This information was forwarded by the Clerk's Office to Councilwoman Laird because of her interest in this matter and related questions. It was forwarded to all of Council following the December 2 meeting.)

Mr. Callahan also asked for an answer to his previous question as to whether the City could charge a flat \$50 fee to all Lehigh and Moravian University students to help pay for public services of fire and EMS protection. He asked Solicitor Steward and Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. for opinions by the December 4 final budget meeting. If allowable, Mr. Callahan believed the total collected would pay for the additional four firefighters.

President Colón

President Colón requested a report from the Administration in time for the December 16 Council meeting summarizing the December 15 homeless eviction, how many were removed, how many were willing to receive assistance, and related details.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *Director of Health – 2025 50 Health Bureau Strategic Plan – Capacity for Change, LLC*

The Clerk read a November 20, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Health Director Kristen Wenrich. Ms. Wenrich seeks authorization to execute an Agreement with Capacity for Change, LLC of West Chester, PA to assist the Health Bureau with creation of a new strategic plan. The cost is \$14,700, and completion is expected by June 30, 2026. There are no renewals. Capacity for Change has facilitated the last two strategic planning processes.

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

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

None.

B. *Mayor*

Mr. Evans acknowledged receiving the six proposed budget amendments to be discussed at the December 4 meeting. Mr. Evans asked whether there were any additional amendments.

President Colón confirmed that just six have been received. The question has been asked whether amendments may be offered during the final budget meeting. The Clerk's Office researched actions at past budget meetings and believed that the Council President is to ask prior to adjournment whether there are any additional amendments. That being said, President Colón offered the belief that it would be best practice to offer amendments in advance to provide ample time for consideration, but he will follow past practice and offer the opportunity near the end of the meeting.

C. *Committee Reports – Ms. Crampsie Smith, Finance Chair*

Ms. Crampsie Smith reported that the Finance Committee met earlier this evening at 6 PM. A representative of the auditing firm outlined the 2024 City audit. Committee members also

recommended moving a budget transfer to purchase police vehicles to Council's agenda tonight (Item 10 A.).

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8A. *Bill No. 58-2025 – Bill No. 58-2025 Capital Plan Funding 2026-2029 – Budget Adjustment Ordinance – General Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 58-2025 Capital Plan Funding 2026-2029 – Budget Adjustment Ordinance – General Fund, sponsored by Ms. Kwiatek and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

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

Voting AYE: Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Laird, Ms. Leon, Mr. Callahan, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 58-2025, now known as Ordinance No. 2025-58, passed on Final Reading.

8B. *Bill No. 59-2025 – Bill No. 59-2025 Amending Article 112 – Campaign Finance Repeal Ordinance*

The Clerk read Bill No. 59-2025 Amending Article 112 – Campaign Finance Repeal Ordinance, sponsored by Ms. Kwiatek and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
ARTICLE 112 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES,
ENTITLED "CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS".

Voting AYE: Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Laird, Ms. Leon, Mr. Callahan, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 59-2025, now known as Ordinance No. 2025-59, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – Police Vehicles – Budget Transfer*

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Leon sponsored Resolution No. 2025-179 that authorized that \$645,000 be transferred from Account No. 0601-40001 – Police-Salaries to Account No. 0801-42083 – Non-Utility to purchase additional police vehicles.

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

B. Approve Resolution – 2025 50 Health Bureau Strategic Plan – Capacity for Change, LLC

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Leon sponsored Resolution No. 2025-180 that authorized to execute an Agreement with Capacity for Change, LLC to assist the Health Bureau in preparing a new strategic plan.

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

President Colón said he would accept a motion and a second to consider agenda Items 10 C through 10 F as a group. Ms. Laird made a motion, seconded by Ms. Leon, to consider agenda items 10 C through 10 F as a group.

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

C. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 25 East Third Street

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Leon sponsored Resolution No. 2025-181 that authorized to install one new wall sign with LED illuminated back-lit channel letters within the sign band and five new printed vinyl signs within the storefront transoms for a new commercial tenant.

D. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 13-15 East Third Street

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Leon sponsored Resolution No. 2025-182 that authorized to modify the existing sign band and storefronts, including replacement of an existing display case to create a new entrance vestibule, and also to paint the existing continuous bands of cast stone windowsills.

E. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 312 East Fourth Street

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Leon sponsored Resolution No. 2025-183 that authorized to install a new ADA-compliant (handicap) ramp with pipe railings.

F. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 21 East Third Street

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Leon sponsored Resolution No. 2025-184 that authorized to install one new wall sign with LED illuminated back-lit channel letters and one non-illuminated projecting blade sign for a new commercial tenant.

Voting AYE for agenda Items 10 C through 10 F: Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Laird, Ms. Leon, Mr. Callahan, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Motion passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 8:04 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk