

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, September 1, 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 (arrived at 7:07 PM), Jo C. Daniels, and Hillary G. Kwiatek (via GoTo Meeting), Colleen Laird, 7.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 18, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola again offered clarification on his views regarding Jewish people.

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer reminded that he asserted at the last meeting that the main culprit for affordable housing is Wall Street. He additionally warned about the dangers of the spiraling national debt.

Mary Jo Makoul

Ms. Makoul was grateful for the intended repaving of Grandview Boulevard; however, she does not appreciate workers pounding signs near her home at 4 a.m. on Saturday or moving heavy equipment at 4:50 a.m. today. She suggested that these are infractions of the City's Noise Ordinance.

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

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics spoke highly of the qualifications and actions of Dennis Domchek, who is being considered this evening for reappointment to the Bethlehem Authority. He urged Council to support this reappointment.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Daniels

Ms. Daniels asked Business Administrator Eric Evans for the original completion date for the fire and EMS study and was told the date was around June or July. She asked for a new completion date and wondered why delivery will be several months late.

Mr. Evans said that, given the comprehensive nature of the study, the seven or so prospective vendors said during the request for proposal stage that it would be unlikely to prepare this document within six months. The administration understood that six-month delivery was unlikely, but that figure remained in the contract to encourage delivery as soon as possible. Progress has been steady, and the administration does not believe it wise to rush the work or accept a partial study. The contract is being extended. This is not uncommon with City contracts. There is no added cost.

Ms. Daniels was particularly concerned about the delivery date so that the information can be considered because it may impact budget discussions. She added that the fire contract is now being negotiated.

Mr. Evans said there is nothing in the study that would impact the labor contract. It likely would, however, impact budget decisions. He added that he does not have a firm completion date.

Ms. Daniels asked Mr. Evans to provide information for areas that still need to be completed and an estimated completion date.

Mr. Evans said he would provide that and believed that the study should arrive in time for budget consideration.

Mayor J. William Reynolds added that, despite Council's February 3, 2026 approval authorizing the study, the Notice to Proceed was not sent until after full contract execution. Those performing the study did not come to Bethlehem to view operations until early April. Six months should be considered from the Notice to Proceed.

Mr. Callahan said that some on Council had an interest in adding four firefighter positions during consideration of the 2026 budget. Staffing is one concern that this study should address. Would it be possible to convey to the company preparing the study to focus on this and at least deliver findings associated with staffing in time for this year's budget consideration?

Mayor Reynolds said it is not as simple to segregate that part of the study. There are interconnections with other aspects.

Mr. Callahan said it is critical for Council to have this study before budget season to make staffing decisions. He urged that the administration contact the company to encourage timely delivery.

Mr. Colón has heard of a desire to hold a Public Safety Committee meeting to discuss the study results once received. He recommended setting this meeting, perhaps in late October, to get it on the calendar in anticipation of the study's receipt.

Ms. Laird recommended that the eventual meeting date be relayed to the company to encourage timely delivery.

Mr. Callahan also asked the status of the fire overtime budget, given the number of vacant positions because of retirements and resignations. Mayor Reynolds did not have exact figures but said much of that budget has been expended. However, the fire academy class graduated roughly in mid-year. Those members have filled most of the open roster spots leaving about two openings. This has slowed overtime use almost entirely.

Ms. Laird

Ms. Laird asked for an update on electronic bill pay and consumer monitoring as budget season approaches. When this topic was raised last year, Messrs. Boscola and Evans said they would research how these programs could be integrated with other City electronic record keeping systems.

Mr. Evans said the City is under contract with its existing vendor until June of 2027. That has given time for research to see how the program can integrate with consumption monitoring of water. A decision would have to be made by March, which appears to be achievable.

Mr. Boscola said this is a data management issue. A lot of coordination would have to be done including billing, metering, automatic bill pay, banking, and perhaps a few others. This likely would involve integration between two vendors. It would involve water and sewer payments and perhaps some miscellaneous bills. It would not include tax payments, at least not at first.

Ms. Daniels

Ms. Daniels asked whether a more aggressive approach could be taken toward trash regulation enforcement. The system of notifying violators, renotifying them if they do not comply, then taking them to the magistrate is lengthy and ineffective in many instances. Can anything else be done?

Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins disagreed with the statement that nothing is working. Many complaints are resolved even before the first violation is sent. She conceded, however, that there are some "problem properties" that result in the frustrations of which Ms. Daniels speaks. She encouraged Ms. Daniels to contact herself or Recycling Coordinator Michael Halbfoerster to report violations. The City is hesitant to pay to clean a property and bill the homeowner because recovery of these funds has been low. This is only done in instances of health or safety threats.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *Council Member – Memorandum – Monthly Reporting to Council Under COA with DEP*

Councilwoman Hillary Kwiatek recommended a Resolution that would establish monthly reporting to City Council regarding the City's Consent Order and Agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection involving the Wastewater Treatment Plant. – Item 10 A.

B. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – The Wicked Botanist – 2026 Lehigh Valley Wicked Plant Festival*

Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended executing a Use Permit Agreement with The Wicked Botanist, and ArtsQuest as sub-permittee, to hold the 2026 Lehigh Valley Wicked Plant Festival. The cost is \$19,950. Completion is to be done by December 31, 2026. There are no renewals. – Item 10 B.

C. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Humanitarian Social Innovations – 2026 Bethlehem-Patillas Annual Celebration*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended executing a Use Permit Agreement with Humanitarian Social Innovations, and sub-permittee ArtsQuest, for the 2026 Bethlehem-Patillas Annual Celebration. – Item 10 C.

D. *Director of Public Works – 2026 32 South Bethlehem Greenway Phase VIII – Langan*

Director of Public Works Michael Alkhal recommended an Agreement with Langan to provide design and engineering services of an urban trail and recreation space between South New Street and East Third Street as Phase VIII of the South Bethlehem Greenway. – Item 10 D.

E. *Business Administrator – 2027 Budget – Pension Minimum Municipal Obligations (MMO) Memo*

Business Administrator Eric Evans provided figures that will be necessary for the City to meet its minimum contribution to the pension plans for 2027. Those amounts will be \$7,231,227 for Police \$3,164,187 for Fire, and \$2,285,887 for PMRS. – For informational purposes only.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

President Leon expressed thanks for large trash cans that have been added along The Greenway. These have been effective.

B. *Mayor*

7 B1. *Administrative Order – Dennis Domchek – Bethlehem Authority*

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon; AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-142 passed.

Mayor Reynolds referred to Mr. Evans' memo regarding the City's pension obligations. The City is in a good position as this relates to the 2027 Budget.

C. *Committee Chairs*

7 C1. Ms. Kwiatek announced that the Community and Economic Development Committee will meet at 6 PM on September 15 in Town Hall to hear proposed zoning text amendments regarding yard setbacks. The yard setback agenda item was postponed from a previous meeting

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8A. Bill No. 25-2026 – Amend Community Development Block Grant Fund – Program Income – Reclassification

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

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT BUDGET FOR 2026.

AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Bill No. 25-2026, now known as Ordinance No. 2026-25, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

9A. Bill No. 26-2026 – List Cartway and Right-of-Way Widths for Certain City Streets

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

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, LISTING CARTWAY AND RIGHT-OF-WAY WIDTHS FOR CERTAIN CITY STREETS.

AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Bill No. 26-2026 passed on First Reading.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – Monthly Reporting to Council Under COA with DEP*

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon; Directed the Director of Water and Sewer Resources to prepare and submit to Council a monthly COA Compliance Report meeting specified content requirements. The reporting requirement shall be for oversight purposes, and this resolution shall not direct the technical or operational management of the wastewater treatment plant, replace the

Mayor's supervision of City departments, or limit the authority of the Department under the COA, the NPDES Permit, or applicable law.

Ms. Kwiatek explained her memo saying she wanted to reinforce public trust in government. When Council learned that conditions at the Wastewater Treatment Plant prompted a Consent Order Agreement (COA) with DEP, she felt "slightly blindsided" as to the situation. Since the COA requires reporting to DEP, she wanted to be sure that Council in its oversight duties receives these reports as well.

Ms. Laird largely agreed with the action but said she intended to offer two amendments. One would involve the timing in which Council would receive the report. She recommended a receipt deadline not later than 45 days following the monthly reporting period. The second proposed amendment would require forwarding to Council within five days of receipt any written correspondence from government agencies regarding the COA, such as fines or compliance concerns.

Mr. Colón asked how long the COA will be in effect.

Mr. Boscola said the period goes through December of 2030. After that, the City must show six continuous months of compliance before COA requirements are lifted. In theory, this could be the middle of 2031.

Amendment 1, adjusting the reporting deadline to not later than 45 days from the end of the reporting period. Sponsors: Laird, Kwiatek; AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7.

Amendment 2, requiring copies being forwarded to Council within 5 days of any written correspondence received from any government agency concerning the COA. Sponsors: Laird, Kwiatek; AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7.

Voting on the Resolution, with its two amendments: AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Resolution, as amended, 2026-143 passed.

B. Approve Use Permit Agreement – The Wicked Botanist – 2026 Lehigh Valley Fall Wicked Plant Festival

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon; Authorized a Use Permit Agreement with The Wicked Botanist, and sub-permittee ArtsQuest, for the 2026 Lehigh Valley Fall Wicked Plant Festival. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-144 passed.

C. Approve Use Permit Agreement – Humanitarian Social Innovations – 2026 Bethlehem-Patillas Annual Celebration

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon; Authorized a Use Permit Agreement with Humanitarian Social Innovations, and sub-permittee ArtsQuest, for the 2026 Bethlehem-Patillas Annual Celebration. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-145 passed.

D. Approve Resolution – 2026 32 South Bethlehem Greenway Phase VIII – Langan

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon; Authorized an agreement with Langan for design and engineering of the South Bethlehem Greenway Phase VIII. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-146 passed.

Motion to combine Items 10 E. through 10 H: Amann, Laird. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Motion passed.

E. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – Main Street and Ohio Road to install two 24"x30" custom designed free-standing signs for World Heritage visitors. The signs will be set in aluminum frames supported by a center aluminum post and will be mounted at an obtuse angle. Both aluminum frame and aluminum post will be powder coated black. The panels will be lit by solar-powered LED fixtures mounted at the top of the frames. The design concept recalls a Moravian iron hinge with its decorative scroll-like appearance;

F. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 108-110 Wesley Street to replace the existing entry door with a period style exterior door from the existing house. New 12" sidelights will be added on each side of the door and a transom window will be added above the door. New frames will be fabricated out of wood with a painted finish;

G. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 427 North New Street to replace the slate roof on the southeast corner with GAF Slateline asphalt shingles in the "Antique Slate" gray color to match the existing shingles; and

H. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 518 Main Street to replace the windows on the second and third floors of the building with aluminum clad, double hung windows that are white in color.

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Resolutions 2026-147 through 2026-150 passed.

Motion to combine Items 10 I. through 10 K: Callahan, Amann. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7. Motion passed.

I. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 115 West Fourth Street to rehabilitate the front façade, including removal of the bow windows and replacing them with aluminum folding doors, demolition of the pent roof, installing a man door and replacing the existing front brick façade with white brick or aluminum siding. The applicant also proposes to install gooseneck light fixtures and a cabinet sign.

J. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 312 East Fourth Street to modify the stone retaining wall along East Fourth Street, restore the side entrance to the rectory, repair the wall between the church and rectory and install an entrance into the rectory basement; and

K. *Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 308 East Third Street* denying an application to modify the stone retaining wall along East Fourth Street, restore the side entrance to the rectory, repair the wall between the church and rectory and install an entrance into the rectory basement.

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Leon. Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 7.
Resolutions 2026-151 through 2026-153 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk