

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
10 East Church Street - Town Hall  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 – 7:00 PM

INVOCATION

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

President Waldron called the meeting to order. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Grace Crampsie Smith, Olga Negrón, J. William Reynolds, Paige Van Wirt, and Adam R. Waldron, 7.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 6, 2020.

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

*Bethlehem Parking Authority*

Jessica Kim, 728 South Hall Street, Allentown, informed her family owns a business on South New Street in Bethlehem. Because her family owns a business they need a parking spot when we are open for business. We paid the Bethlehem Parking Authority for a monthly pass. We have been paying them on a monthly basis and it has been an automatic payment that has been charged to our card. We have been having issues since September with the payment. We were notified that the payment did not go through so her mother went to the office to make a payment and that occurred in October. In November we did not receive any notification so we believed that the monthly charge had gone through. Her mother received a ticket for her car on November 6, 2020. She went to the office and they told her it was an issue with the payment and that she had been properly charged for the month of November. They told her at the time that she received a ticket because it was a mistake on their part, something that had to do with the license plate. That ticket was cleared. She received another ticket on November 9, 2020. We went back to the office and at that time they told us that the payment was not charged for the November monthly fee. Ms. Kim spoke with the clerk and asked why she did not tell her mother that on November 6, 2020 when she was there in the office and specifically asked whether there was any issue with the monthly payment. She has appealed that ticket. After that she received a ticket on November 10, 12, and 13, 2020. She has spoken to the clerk at the Bethlehem Parking Authority and has cleared the tickets for November 10, 12, and 13, 2020. Ms. Kim noted they said they have no issue with their systems or operations and that everything has been going fine. Her issue is that obviously there is an issue with their payment system and with the way they operate their business. She wanted to see what Council was doing to ensure that they compliant with everything and are held accountable for their actions.

President Waldron encourages Ms. Kim to reach out to the Parking Authority and ask to talk to the senior management there and to see what is causing this problem. Mr. Steve Fernstrom is the Director of the Parking Authority and typically is quite responsive. He should be able to help solve this issue.

Ms. Kim noted when she spoke to the clerk at the Parking Authority she asked if they are a private entity and she said they were a part city/part private company.

President Waldron noted that is true, City Council does not have any authority over the Parking Authority as far as their operations but we can point you in the right direction. Another avenue would be to reach out when the Bethlehem Parking Authority Board has a meeting; they are the group that oversees the Parking Authority in day to day operations. They might be able to help you out solving this problem.

Ms. Kim asked if she would have to talk to the Parking Authority Board.

President Waldron stated yes or just call the office tomorrow and ask to talk to a manager or the Director of the Parking Authority.

Ms. Kim remarked when she was speaking to the manager he did not want to listen to her so she is frustrated.

President Waldron noted clearly there is an issue specifically with your license plate and he is sure now that you have brought this up in a public setting he would imagine it will get resolved quickly.

Ms. Kim stated it is not her license plate, they are issuing tickets and when she spoke to the clerk she said their system has not been updated.

President Waldron remarked he cannot speak to that issue.

Ms. Kim asked if Council approves their contract.

President Waldron stated no.

Ms. Kim asked who would be approving their contract.

President Waldron noted it would be the Board that oversees the Parking Authority. He reiterated she should give a call to the Parking Authority tomorrow and he would imagine this issue should be able to be resolved.

Mr. Callahan advised her to call Mr. Fernstrom or Mr. Cantelmi, those are the people she should go to.

President Waldron remarked he has told her that.

*Parking Authority*

Artie Curatola, 813 Laufer Street, noted as far as the young lady who spoke before we need to remember that the Parking Authority is out to make money and they make money off of us taxpaying citizens, not the renegades who do not pay for the parking tickets. They make money off of the upstanding citizens. Mr. Curatola reported we need to get a petition together because the Parking Authority does not listen; he has gone to their meetings and gave them good ideas for us taxpayers. What gives some people the right to have 2, 3, or 4 parking permits for one person and then they can work on cars in the streets to make money. This should be limited to 1 per family. If it has to be 2 for a family they should be able to rent a parking space in the garage. The renegades that will not address those tickets their vehicles should be towed and make them pay out of their own pocket. Those booted vehicles are on the street for 2 to 3 weeks at a time taking up legal spots so it is then hard for citizens to park. If it is not going to be taken care of we need to get petitions signed. Mr. Curatola asked why certain people get their streets cleaned and others do not. If they really want to clean the streets it should be after the leaves are picked up. They just want to make it harder for parking so we then get tickets and pay money to the Parking Authority that is what it is all about. He has his phone number on the side of his van and if they want his vehicle to be moved they can call him, but they do not call. They should call him and ask him to move his vehicle. They could still give him a ticket but tell him to move the vehicle, but they do not do that. We taxpaying citizens need to get together. We should take control of the Parking Authority and have it run by the city completely and get rid of the other entity.

*Police*

John Irons, 1204 West Market Street, informed he is a volunteer and a leader with Lehigh Valley Stands Up and he is calling tonight to talk about one of our campaigns which is police accountability. He and some of his community members made comments at the First Budget Meeting last week and he just wanted to make some comments tonight as City Council is potentially considering amendments to the budget. He understands that there are more meetings to come. In conversation with his colleagues, friends, and people he knows in the community he thinks our priorities are clear, there are a lot of needs in our city that are not addressed by the police. There is a public health crisis that is coming down on us; there is an economic crisis that is right around the corner. The Mayor's budget was planning for some of that but was unfortunately leaving the police department untouched. Some of our asks are simple as Council is considering amendments. One is that if they're going to be any cuts to personnel in any department in the city then there should be cuts in the police department personnel that are equal to or greater than those cuts. The police department is the biggest slice of the city budget and it is the primary driver of the pension obligations. There are ways to do this, one is to revisit any MOU's or contracts with the Bethlehem Area School District in providing school resource officers. We do not have the need for school resource officers then those would be positions that are cut. We also recommend implementing a hiring freeze for any new officers and make sure that retirements, promotions, transfers, terminations, and things like that are not being automatically replaced but have to seek permission from Council to do that. Mr. Irons explained in future years we hope that there is a serious divestment from the police department. There are a lot of needs in our community. Our Health Bureau could do a lot more with its clinic hours. We would be interested in seeing meaningful alternatives to policing including more mental health and social workers expanding the existing social worker program pretty much immediately. We would also

like to see new oversights from the City Council specifically to police officer discipline for those who are subject to disciplinary hearings. Those files should be made public and anyone who is fired as a result of overuse of force or noncompliance, that list should be made public. Any new training that the Bethlehem Police Department is trying to implement or seek out should be done within their existing budgetary constraints and not with new grants or new monies from the city. Mr. Irons really appreciates the transparency that City Council has in terms of streaming the meetings on YouTube and allowing a very liberal calling process. It is refreshing and really powerful to allow our citizens to contribute to a forum like this.

A resident of 1204 West Market Street stated she is calling to express support for the proposals being advanced right now by Lehigh Valley Stands Up. These are proposals that were crafted with a broad base of support, multigenerational and multiethnic and they are based on evidence. They suggest what the previous caller just talked about. This also includes health and housing and things that have been ignored in favor of expanding police budgets. We are seeing increasing evidence that policing is not working in the way we expect it to including in Bethlehem. We referenced many times in these meetings data about the Bethlehem Police Department so she really hopes that Council will take this opportunity in this budget season to think strategically and creatively about ways we can keep our community safe and healthy. She looks forward to seeing the budget numbers with the people's interest represented.

Michele Downing, Lehigh Street, stated she has some thoughts about this budget. She is hoping we are looking at the actual time constraints and how short of a time we have to address the pending catastrophes that are going to be happening. In six weeks people are going to run out of their mortgage assistance if they got any at all and there will be no more moratoriums on evictions. We are looking at an ever impressive housing crisis as it is here in Bethlehem. In January anyone who had an assistance for forgiveness on student loans will have to resume payment of those, all the while our COVID numbers are rising and we have an insecure job market and food insecurity here in Bethlehem. When she thinks about us dedicating only 20 hours of a social worker to coordinate with a city of 75,000 people and the police department, she is a social worker and she has been one for nearly 20 years here in the Lehigh Valley. For 15-20 hours a week she can help 12 people, she can work with 12 people if there are resources available for those people to get any kind of assistance. Ms. Downing does not think we are looking at all at what the needs of the city are going to be over this next year or two in terms of helping medical and mental health substance abuse services, the food insecurity, people who are struggling already with child care. We lack the infrastructure that is not supporting our kids with online learning. They are not doing well. We have entire student populations here in Bethlehem that are receiving a fair amount of mental health services for free while in school through a contract and they are not getting those services anymore. We all need to tighten our belts, the citizens, the Fire Department, the Police Department in a way we can redistribute and support our citizens in this next year or two years if we are lucky enough to come out of this COVID recovery in a way that some other cities have not been so lucky. We have all seen videos of 25,000 cars in line at food banks and we are not removed from that here in Bethlehem. Ms. Downing is looking forward to this process and the discussion about resources and where they actually belong for citizens.

Glen Nelson, 711 W. Broad Street noted he is also calling to support proposals brought forth by Lehigh Valley Stands Up for the immediate hiring freeze of new police officers and the future defunding of the department. We put forth a number of 16% which would amount to

doubling the Health Department's budget if reallocated which seems in the middle of a pandemic a commonsense move, especially when you look how critically underfunded the Health Bureau has been previously. It makes sense during a pandemic and a financial crisis to look at where money is actually critically needed right now and the Police Department is a budget that typically if you look at it over a few years goes up by a small increment every year which amounts to a large increase over the course of a decade. That leads it to being the largest portion of our budget. In the midst of this financial crisis our city has seen it reasonable getting rid of Fire Department officials and with cuts to other departments even while the police budget is rising has been critically underfunded. It seems unjustifiable in the current climate to continue to do something that is not pragmatic and is not working. We know it is not working for our communities and it is putting people of color and people with mental health at a much higher risk. Mr. Nelson is calling for defunding the police and he hopes that amendments will be put forth that look at actually getting rid of police officers and look at getting mental health and health and human services positions added to the city which are so desperately needed.

Jenna Teague, 940 Cherokee Street, relate she is calling to echo her colleagues who have called in before her about the budget meetings that will be coming up soon here. She would like to bring up the mental health and substance abuse crisis that has been affecting our communities long before COVID. This pandemic has only made things worse. She can state from personal experience that her mental health has gotten far worse. Ever since that meeting last week when we were talking about increased police presence on the south side where she lives, she is worried about it. She knows if she is in crisis police will not help her. Ms. Teague is not alone in that thought, feeling, and experience. Given the crisis with mental health, substance abuse, and COVID that has shed light on how deep inequalities we face as a community. We all need to make sacrifices everywhere. There is one place to look and that is the police department and their budget because police are not meeting the needs of our community and those community needs are getting worse. One part time social worker will not help us at all. The citizens of the Lehigh Valley have made enough sacrifices already so now it is your turn.

Patricia, 503 W. Fourth Street, informed she is calling in support of the budget proposal put forth by Lehigh Valley Stands Up and to ask for steps to defund the Bethlehem Police Department in order to reallocate those funds towards community improvement programs. While one of the most obvious justifications for this is the fact that we are in the midst of a deadly unprecedented pandemic that has been going on for a year now. We have seen a disturbing increase in cases in our county she can personally attest to the amazing benefit of public health programs. She does not remember the last time she had insurance and she struggles to afford even basic healthcare. When she found out she could receive health services free of cost just for being a Bethlehem resident she was ecstatic. Part of why she is still here and part of why she would be able to pull herself up by the boot straps is because she had access to affordable health services. As anyone who struggles with mental health can tell you and as we can tragically see from cases like Walter Wallace Jr. in Philadelphia, calling 9-1-1 in response to mental health issues tends to worsen and escalate the situation because the police are not the best for these problems. She can sleep at night knowing she has the best health services but she cannot say the same about the Bethlehem Police Department nor should they be expected to address these needs. Especially with a city that prides itself on a history and culture of hard work and diversity, it only makes sense to devote more funds to programs that could actively improve the lives of residents on a regular basis. She can hear just from previous callers that everyone is worried and concerned about the second wave of COVID and as eviction moratoriums come to an end. She is worried

about her student loan repayments starting up again in January. It is not easy to budget for things now but these things are really necessary and just keeping the current budget will not be much of a benefit.

Anthony Downing, 626 W. Lehigh Street, stated he is calling to express his support for the proposal put forth for the budget from Lehigh Valley Stands Up. He is also a member of Lehigh Valley DSA and he can remember clearly standing in front of Council with his cane and back brace describing the concerns of himself and the rest of our community in reference to the support that Bethlehem City Council which he remembers unanimously passed a resolution supporting Medicare For All. The City of Bethlehem recognized that not only is it a financial burden, the rising cost of healthcare and insurance for employees of the city but also it is a public health initiative in order to make sure that everybody is taken care of and health in our city. He wants to call on that because he wants to bring everybody back to that moment when we all supported the health and welfare of our city. Currently with the budget that was proposed which he understands City Council will have the opportunity to make amendments in our next meetings he wanted to remind everyone of that time and that feeling when we were all supportive and welcoming to each other in our city to make sure we were healthy and safe. Currently right now putting more money into the police budget and taking money away from the Fire Department and other services and on top of that putting a 5% tax on all of us, the citizens he would consider that to be opposite. Mr. Downing would echo what all of the previous callers had said, all of his community members who have expressed good points and views from mental health to public safety. In reality we should be spending this money in the middle of a global pandemic to bolster our public health and to make our city safer. More police and cutting everything else is not doing that job. Mr. Downing wanted to thank City Council for always being open and transparent and interacting with the community, that is important and we value that. City Council has done the right thing before and Mr. Downing believes that going forward with this next budget meeting that we will be appropriately cutting money from the police budget to make sure it is going to social services elsewhere so we are all healthy and safe.

Alexander Fischer, 1526 Lebanon Street, informed he had a concern about the cutting of the budget and how that might lead to cuts in departments that are not the police department due to the long hot summer of the calling to defund the police. He supports the Lehigh Valley Stands Up people's budget. He supports cutting of the police budget and reallocating funds to mental health services. In that regard there were a lot of people that he talked to in Bethlehem and in the community that do not feel safe calling the police for things like mental health because of what goes on in the nation and other police department around. Not that our police department in particular is egregious but he does think the police department overall is very over funded. He also would like to mention there is no evidence that more policing leads to less crime. He does think a lot of what drives the desire and need to have such a large and robust police budget is this myth that we would have an unsafe society without police. There is such a partisan divide right now that there is not necessarily a hatred for police developing but there is developing the rethinking and reimaging and a questioning of the function of police and what police work is. Due to the desire across the country to defund the police he thinks that Bethlehem has a good chance to represent the Lehigh Valley and eastern Pennsylvania in taking a step towards reallocating funds from the police department into health and mental health services. Mr. Fischer noted this would make a lot of community members especially ones of color and women feel a lot safer calling someone to show up when they have a mental health crisis or any crisis.

Bruce Haines, 63 West Church Street, remarked he has been listening to the Lehigh Valley Stand Up people for the last 25 minutes. Obviously they have one agenda which is to the Bethlehem Police Budget and they use the national agenda for that which he will say certainly is not a mandate across the country to cut police budgets. He thinks this is a minority position by all stretch of the imagination. He agrees with them to a certain point that the Bethlehem Police were not meeting the needs of our community last year quite frankly because we were so understaffed. The Bethlehem Police Department only now got back up to staffing levels that gives all of us in the business community a sense of safety from the perspective of a town and a community that is attempting to bring tourists to Bethlehem. If you go on the Trip Advisor website you will see that we are considered not a very safe community, we are considered an unsafe community. Mr. Haines does not believe we are an unsafe community but he thinks that the police are a critical part of ensuring that Bethlehem puts its best foot forward in terms of satisfying the needs of the entire community. The Lehigh Valley Stands Up issue about mental health, he does not take issue with that but they need to refocus that mental health issues are not necessarily only solvable by taking money away from the police. They need to start looking at other options for funding mental health if that is really an issue. He has heard that it is most important that our police presence here in Bethlehem is certainly not excessive. We do not have a major police problem here in Bethlehem. The local Lehigh Valley Stands Up tries to make it into a problem but it is not a problem. Mr. Haines stated he is here to defend our police and to defend the funding of the police. He knows that he stands for a whole lot of other people who have not called in because the Mayor's budget did not cut the police. He certainly wants to advocate on behalf of many people in Bethlehem to not support the Lehigh Valley Stand Up position on trying to find money for mental health by taking it away from our police department and decreasing the safety of our community. Thank you for listening to the other side.

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

*Pedestrian Bridge Study*

Ed Gallagher, 49 W. Greenwich Street informed on the agenda tonight is the vote on the resolution to fund the feasibility study for the pedestrian bridge study. One of the Councilmen at least twice in the past has asked if \$40,000 committed to that study is locked in. He does not know at least publicly whether that is true or not if that \$40,000 is locked in combined with the money from the County and elsewhere. He added by the way a tip of the hat to the Mayor and other Administrative officials for engaging that money. If that \$40,000 is locked in what he would be talking about tonight is mute. He would have to proceed on the basis that this money might still be floating free. That same Councilman has said he will vote against that resolution because he has video of our three bridges showing unused walking and riding space already available that the proposers of the pedestrian/biking bridge could achieve their goals with the three bridges that we have. Mr. Gallagher would like to present some counter thinking to that and hope that if indeed this is an issue tonight he guesses the Councilman would not have mentioned the video if there was not a chance he would be able to show it to you folks. He would offer some counter to the idea that there is already available and hardly used walking/riding space. First we should say that bicycles are not supposed to ride on sidewalks, bicycles are supposed to ride on roads and bikes and pedestrians are not a good mix unless there is adequate width space. Mr. Gallagher noted if the pedestrian bike bridge goes a few steps down the line it looks to him that they will meet State, Federal, or at least professional organization standards for the width of a

bridge. His rough research indicates that a pathway between bikes and pedestrians should be at least 10 feet wide. He was able to look at the Fahy Bridge and the Hill to Hill Bridge today but could not get to the Minsi Trail Bridge. The pathways on the Hill to Hill Bridge and the Fahy Bridge are 6 feet wide. Again, professional organization standards for a pathway in which bikes and pedestrians share indicate to him that they should be at least 10 feet wide. The Fahy Bridge loses even 15 inches more of that because of the bump in for lighting and the Hill to Hill Bridge narrows at the trestle. So those two bridges are considerably smaller in width than what would be considered safe. Mr. Gallagher mentioned he is 24 inches from elbow to elbow with his brisk walking stride. His bike is 25 inches across the handlebars. There are hard walls on both sides of the pathway on those two bridges, not soft shoulders like you would have on Saucon Trail. Mr. Gallagher mentioned that two walkers can barely pass side by side on those bridges and a moving bike passing a walker is a delicate passage. When you see a bike coming and you are working you scrunch and you keep looking behind you for a bike that may be passing you. The margin for error when a moving bike passes a pedestrian on those pathways is very slim. Mr. Gallagher would ask Council to discount the argument that there are unused spaces now available to the proponents of that pedestrian biking bridge if that issue does indeed come up in the discussion of the resolution.

5. OLD BUSINESS

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

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. *Director of Community and Economic Development – Recommendation of Award – WRT – Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated October 28, 2020 from Alicia Karner, Director of Community and Economic Development recommending a contract with WRT for the Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study. The estimated completion date is January 2022. The total cost of the contract is \$140,000 and will use \$40,000 dollars in city funds. There are no renewals.

President Waldron stated Resolution 10 B is on the agenda.

- B. *Controller’s Financial Administrator – Records Destruction*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated November 11, 2020 from Nancy Bisazza, Controller’s Financial Administrator requesting Council to consider a resolution for the destruction of records from the Controller’s Office listed in the attached exhibit. The Controller has reviewed the municipal records retention act and the records fall within the categories where destruction is permitted.

President Waldron stated the resolution can be placed on the December 1, 2020 agenda.

- C. *Director of Public Works – Recommendation of Award – Armour & Sons Electric, Inc. – Traffic Signal Upgrades Price Increase*



The Clerk read a memorandum dated November 11, 2020 from Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works recommending an amendment to a contract with Armour and Sons Electric Inc. in connection with a traffic signals upgrade price increase. The new contract price is \$126,077 dollars. The term of the contract runs 60 days to substantial completion, 90 days to final completion. There are no renewals.

President Waldron stated Resolution 10 C is on the agenda.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

1. *Councilmanic Appointment – Benjamin Felzer – Environmental Advisory Council*

President Waldron reappointed Benjamin Felzer to membership on the Environmental Advisory Council. This appointment is effective until January, 2024. Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-194 to confirm the reappointment.

Mr. Reynolds informed he will certainly be supporting Mr. Felzer tonight. He has been a great member of the Environmental Advisory Council and has brought a lot to that board. He has been very involved with the Climate Action Plan and building up the Environmental Advisory Council to its position of strength that we see it in now. Mr. Reynolds wanted to thank Mr. Felzer for his service and he will support him tonight.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

B. *Mayor*

1. *Administrative Order – Erin Hefferan – Blighted Property Review Committee*

Mayor Donchez appointed Erin Hefferan to membership on the Blighted Property Review Committee effective through October, 2023. Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-195 to confirm the appointment.

Mr. Colón informed he will be abstaining from this vote. He does appreciate the consideration given to this appointment. If anyone has any question for Erin he is happy to go get her.

President Waldron noted Ms. Hefferan will do a great job and serve the city well.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Abstain: Mr. Colón, 1. The Resolution passed.

2. *Administrative Order – Patrick Herrity – Blighted Property Review Committee*

Mayor Donchez reappointed Patrick Herrity to membership on the Blighted Property Review Committee effective through October, 2024. Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-196 to confirm the reappointment.

Mr. Reynolds noted he spoke to Mr. Herrity on Saturday. He had spoken to Mr. Reynolds about how interested he was in the work they were doing. A lot of times we see especially with these Boards and Committees, some that do not come before us or not as quite a high profile, but there are many citizens that serve and put their time and effort into going to these meetings. We need people on these Boards. We all know these people that serve give up their time just because they love their city. Mr. Reynolds just wanted to point that out; we have a lot of citizens that really do want to be part of the solution. He will be voting for Mr. Herrity tonight.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

3. *Administrative Order – John Filipos – Bethlehem Revitalization and Improvement Authority*

Mayor Donchez reappointed John Filipos to membership on the Bethlehem Revitalization and Improvement Authority effective through November, 2025. Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-197 to confirm the reappointment.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

*COVID-19 Update*

Mayor Donchez noted he just received from our Health Director, Kristen Wenrich dated November 17, 2020 the update on COVID-19. He stated currently cases as of November 16, 2020 in the City of Bethlehem is 2,175, current deaths as of November 16, 2020 is 84. During a 7 day period from November 6, 2020 to November 12, 2020 the City of Bethlehem had 238.8 cases per 100,000 people, 213 positive cases in Bethlehem, 4 hospitalizations and 1 new death. He added that 7.6% of cases are associated with an outbreak. We are starting to see cases increase in worksites once again. He noted that 29.3 % of cases were contacts to a known case. The Health Bureau is continuing to closely monitor the long term care facilities as cases have started to increase in these facilities. The Bethlehem Emergency Shelter is opening this weekend. The Bethlehem Health Bureau at St. Luke's University Health Network have worked closely on developing a process for screening, testing, and isolating any sick individuals.

Mayor Donchez noted he will now read his budget speech.

President Waldron remarked it is a nice tradition to let Council and everyone watching at home to hear your remarks.

*2021 Budget Speech*

Last November I delivered my budget speech in front of 300 hundred people at the Factory. I reflected on the strong national and local economies, and highlighted the ambitious goals and initiatives we had in place for 2020. Today, we are live-streaming my budget address

from the Musikfest Café in the ArtsQuest Center, with only 25 people in attendance, wearing masks, and scattered across the room. Who could have imagined what 2020 would hold in store for us? We have witnessed, and withstood, unimaginable heartbreak and tragedy at every turn. During that same time, we have had heroes step forward to help us in our time of need. We are not through it yet, but hopefully there will be positive signs in 2021 that indicate we are making progress, and a return to normalcy will begin to take place. It was soon after the New Year that we began to hear the words that have become household terms: Coronavirus, COVID-19, Pandemic, and Social Distancing. By March it was here in the Lehigh Valley, right on our doorstep. Cities became ghost towns as we sheltered in place. Businesses closed. Supermarkets were pressed to provide basic necessities as supply chains were stretched. Hospitals prepared to fight this invisible enemy.

Inside City Hall, I worked diligently with my cabinet to take all the necessary steps to keep our employees and residents safe, while continuing to deliver all the essential services a city is responsible to provide. As we learned more each day, our policies and procedures continuously evolved. Our Health Bureau, led by Kristen Wenrich, has been invaluable during this time. I want to thank all the employees of the City for their courage, cooperation, flexibility, and focus on our mission.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals and organizations that have donated equipment and supplies to the City. Melissa Fillman, a good friend, has made and donated thousands of masks. Wind Creek supplied gloves and disinfectant very early on when it was very difficult to find. St. Luke's University Health Network provided hospital grade virus disinfectant, COVID killer, masks and other PPE. Chick-fil-A, Walmart, and Josh Early Candies provided food to our first responders. Eight Oaks, Social Still and Bethlehem City Spirits donated hand sanitizers. Zulily provided 11,000 KN-95 masks. Northampton County provided PPE for unmet needs and Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure has been a true partner and very supportive throughout this pandemic. The Federal CARES Act has allowed the Counties to provide funding directly to businesses. In addition, both counties provided grants to Bethlehem to purchase first responder equipment, PPE, IT equipment, and supported our response to our downtown community, specifically the restaurants that have been struggling during this time.

The impact of the pandemic derailed economic activity across the country and Bethlehem was not spared. Our revenues will not meet projections this year. We made a number of adjustments to reduce expenses and limit the deficit. I immediately issued a hiring freeze. Some employees were furloughed. The recycling center and yard waste facility were closed. Pools and parks were closed. Traditional summer programming was cancelled. My financial team met with each department to target specific reductions in line items, and postponed a number of planned projects. Despite the trauma the pandemic created, Bethlehem moved forward in 2020. Our employees remained healthy and the City remained fully functional.

Construction of Memorial Pool was put on hold in mid-March, but restarted in mid-May, and is now complete. It looks fabulous, and I am looking forward to its reopening next summer. The golf course re-opening was delayed from March to May 1<sup>st</sup> and proceeded to set an all-time record for revenue in a month. From May to September, the course set monthly records. In August, it actually re-set the all-time record that was just set in May. All sand traps were fully renovated last off-season and playing conditions received rave reviews all summer. Last month the cart paths were fully renovated and really provided that finishing touch. Over the winter we

will review plans to replace the starter's shed with a permanent pro-shop behind the putting green, making check-in at the course safer and more user-friendly.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> Engine-6 arrived at Memorial Fire Station on West Broad Street, the 2<sup>nd</sup> new fire apparatus in 2 years. The 3<sup>rd</sup> engine in 3 years will arrive next spring to replace Engine-3 at Schweder Fire Station on 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

Our new housing inspection program officially began when procedures were in place to allow for safe inspections. The Community and Economic Development Department, led by Director Alicia Karner, took the initiative to support our restaurants by providing parklets, furniture, and heaters for outdoor dining. I give a big thank you to our Public Works Department, led by Mike Alkhal, for building, filling, and deploying over 100 parklets in the 2 downtowns.

Public Works, short staffed for months due to the hiring freeze, diligently maintained our streets, parks, green spaces, public buildings, and fleet of vehicles.

The Recreation Bureau partnered with our Health Bureau to run safe outdoor programming for youth across the City. The Police and Fire Departments were great additions to community engagement initiatives.

In the midst of this, Standard and Poor's conducted a credit review in July. They analyzed our financial status and listened to our strategies for the future. They issued a report that reaffirmed our A+ credit rating, with a stable outlook.

Our strong financial position was built by developing and implementing sound financial strategies. I want to take this opportunity to thank my Financial Advisory Committee, members of City Council and City Controller, George Yasso, for working with my Administration during my tenure to create a successful budgeting process.

2020 has certainly delivered a punch to the gut, but we have responded, and will make it to the end of the year on stable ground.

2021 will present a whole new set of challenges that will need to be met. Even under the best scenario the impact of the pandemic will continue to be with us well into next year.

The financial impact of the pandemic became clear enough by late summer, that we were able to begin running projections for 2021. Our initial budget model revealed a deficit of \$4.5 million, primarily driven by 2 items, the loss of revenue due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, and another increase in pension obligations.

Projections indicate that many of our revenue sources will be significantly reduced in 2021. Earned Income Tax, one of our largest line items, is subject to employment levels, and it falls when unemployment rises.

Another large line item is the casino host fee. Although Wind Creek has continued to make their quarterly base host fee payment of \$2 million, the activity inside the casino is limited for safety reasons, and thus the incremental fee that is based on gaming activity will not reach prior levels of nearly \$500,000 per quarter.

General economic activity requiring permits and inspections will continue to be affected, as it has been this year.

The other major factor complicating this budget is increased pension obligations. Pensions have often been the topic of concern at budget time in cities across the Commonwealth. Every other year we are faced with adjustments to our Minimum Municipal Obligation, or MMO, which is the City's required payment into the pension funds.

In 2012, the City was successful in aligning pensions for new hires to the minimum benefit required by state law, and we hope to see some relief from that adjustment in coming years. However, this summer, when our bi-annual actuarial pension study was completed, it was confirmed that Bethlehem's pension payments will increase by over one million dollars next year. In 2021, our police pension MMO alone will increase by \$900,000 to \$7.2 million. Fire pension MMO will increase by \$200,000, to \$4.4 million. Total pension expense will rise to \$16.2 million in 2021, which represents 18.5% of our overall General Fund budget.

Understanding the size of the projected deficit, all departments were tasked with intense cutting of discretionary line item expenses. In addition, we postponed our borrowing that was planned for 2021. Our 5-year capital plan typically includes a bond borrowing of approximately \$5 million in order to complete capital projects and purchases. Bond borrowing will be postponed until 2022 when the economy is hopefully back on firmer footing.

In previous years, that would have been enough to balance the budget. Unfortunately, it will not be enough for 2021, and additional steps will be needed. During my tenure, we have streamlined operations, refinanced debt at lower rates, increased the use of tablets and technology, and leveraged our purchasing power to achieve better deals for energy, banking, and healthcare. Those decisions have made us a stronger organization. It also has made it more difficult to find incremental improvements to address budget deficits.

Due to the pandemic, we anticipate a loss of \$1 million dollars in revenue in 2021 in the areas of EIT, casino activity, and economic development. Although it is not desirable to use cash balance to replace recurring revenue, I believe it is appropriate to use \$1 million from our cash account towards balancing our budget in 2021. Hopefully, the effects of the pandemic will begin to improve by the end of next year, and those specific line items will begin to return to previous levels, negating the need for ongoing cash infusions.

The continued increase in pension obligations is more concerning, as it is not a one-time event. Difficult decisions were made in order to implement the corrective action needed to flatten the curve. Police and Fire pensions have continued to increase at rates that are just not sustainable to a budget. Our revenues do not mirror the increase in pension obligations. To offset the steady growth through the years, there have been personnel cuts across several departments that have reduced staffing to the point it has become a challenge to complete primary functions and meet daily responsibilities. Continuing to reduce personnel in departments to offset increased costs of other departments creates a fundamental imbalance in an organization. Public Safety is the highest priority, but not the only responsibility of the City.

We spend every day providing a wide array of essential services to our residents. We need to continue operating our water and wastewater facilities, continue to maintain our infrastructure, and continue to respond to the ever-growing and diverse needs of our community.

Pensions that were promised years ago have been earned through loyal public service, but represent a significant burden on the budget of the City, not only by the size, but the rapid rate of growth. The only path to truly slow and contain this growth, without any pension reform from Harrisburg, is to adjust staffing levels. Not taking action will only perpetuate the problem.

Since becoming Fire Chief, Chief Achey has introduced a number of initiatives to improve functions and efficiencies. With the addition of 2 (and soon to be 3) new engines, the Department is more dynamic and flexible than ever before. By reducing 1 position on each platoon, the Fire Department will reduce staffing, through attrition, from 110 to 106. I have the utmost confidence they will continue to provide the high level of service to the residents of Bethlehem.

2 additional positions will be eliminated through attrition from the Bethlehem Service Center. The Service Center has been successful in responding to non-emergency calls, emails, and App submissions from residents and visitors since the creation of the Center in May of 2019. Now that the Center has been in operation for a year, efficiencies have been identified, and the staffing will be reduced from 15 to 13. The Center will still be operational 24/7/365 days a year.

The 6 personnel reductions between the departments will save \$500,000 each year in salary and benefits, and just as importantly help control future pension obligations.

The City's workforce will drop from a high of 670 in 2010 to 588 during 2021, which will be the lowest in many decades. In order to close the remaining gap and balance the budget, I am proposing a .92 mil (5%) property tax increase for 2021. For a home assessed at \$50,000, that would equate to a \$46 per year increase.

The budgeted General Fund Revenue for 2021 is \$87.4 million. Real Estate Tax remains the largest revenue component at 36.7%. Federal, State, and County Grants account for 13.5%.

The General Fund Expenses are set at \$87.4 million to balance the budget for 2021. Note that personnel expense is the largest portion of our budget at 76.4%. The Police Department is the largest in terms of employees and dollars, at 154 and \$25.4 million, respectively. As a group, our Public Safety Departments (Police, Fire, and EMS) will cost \$44.0 million to fund in 2021.

2020 has been, by far, the most difficult year of my 7-year Administration. I know you join me in that thought and I hope and pray that we will turn the corner in 2021.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging and thanking all the sponsors, residents, businesses, educational and medical institutions for their support, cooperation and patience. The partnerships that were created in the past with the Chamber, the DBA, Lehigh University, Moravian College, Northampton Community College, East Stroudsburg University, BASD, St. Luke's University Health Network and Lehigh Valley Health Network, just to name a few, have proven unbreakable in 2020. In addition, my administration will continue to support the business and restaurant community the best we can.

As a part of these efforts, I have decided to extend the use of the parklets until December 4<sup>th</sup>. During the week of November 16, I will reevaluate the use of parklets and future weather projections. If the outlook is positive, parklets will be extended through December 31, 2020. It is also my goal to make the parklets an annual event. We did meet today to discuss this issue and he can say that the parklets will be extended through December 31, 2020. I believe it adds a lot to our downtowns. Again, depending on weather, I will look to tentatively bring the parklets back in late March or early April.

This past October 7, 2020, I had the privilege of swearing in the first female Chief of Police for the City of Bethlehem, and he believes this is the third in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Michelle Kott. I am looking forward to working with Chief Kott and I believe she will do an outstanding job for the residents of Bethlehem.

The future of Bethlehem is bright, but we need to battle though this pandemic and hopefully, in late 2021, return to some sense of normalcy. I thank you for watching my budget address and I hope to see you on the streets of Bethlehem during the holiday season. Please stay tuned for my State of the City address in 2021.

President Waldron thanked Mayor Donchez and added that the city has been asked to do a lot more and typically has been in the past much like business owners and families have all been asked to do during a really challenging year. He thanked Mayor Donchez for coming tonight and giving his remarks. He knows the budget that was presented and that Council is in the process of reviewing was a really challenging one for everyone to put together. He looks forward to continuing those conversations through this year as we work on the budget and into 2021 as we start to rebound and recover from 2020.

C. *Human Resources and Environment Committee Meeting*

Chairman Callahan announced the Human Resources and Environment Committee met on November 5, 2020. The committee reviewed a proposed bill that would establish a new codified ordinance article titled Wage Equality. After discussion of several proposed amendments, the committee accepted the amendments and voted unanimously to forward the bill to full Council for consideration with those amendments included. The Wage Equality bill is on tonight's agenda for First Reading.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

A. *Bill No. 24 - 2020 - Amending 2020 General Fund - Adjustments - COVID Funding*

The Clerk read Bill No. 24 - 2020 - Amending 2020 General Fund - Adjustments - COVID Funding, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Waldron and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING  
THE 2020 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 24 - 2020 now known as Ordinance No. 2020-21 was passed on Final Reading.

B. *Bill No. 25 - 2020 - Amending 2020 Non-Utility Capital Improvement Fund - Adjustments - COVID Funding*

The Clerk read Bill No. 25 - 2020 - Amending 2020 Non-Utility Improvement Fund - Adjustments - COVID Funding, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Waldron and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING  
THE 2020 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 25 - 2020 now known as Ordinance No. 2020-22 was passed on Final Reading.

C. *Bill No. 26 - 2020 - Amending 2020 Community Development Block Grant/HOME Budget - Adjustments - CARES Act Funding*

The Clerk read Bill No. 26 - 2020 - Amending 2020 Community Development Block Grant/HOME Budget - Adjustments - CARES Act Funding, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Waldron and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING  
THE 2020 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT  
BUDGET

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 26 - 2020 now known as Ordinance No. 2020-23 was passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

President Waldron remarked that we have quite a few as we will be adopting a First Reading of the 2021 budget. Each one of those specific line items will be called and voted on individually. After we do these they will be off the agenda for two weeks until we review them in the appropriate budget meeting and then we will have last reading on December 15, 2020.

Mr. Callahan asked if this is the first of the two votes.

President Waldron stated yes, this is First Reading and typical path we have taken over the past 7 or 8 years at least since he has been on Council. This is what we have always



considered a fair vote. We will vote on this, have the individual budget meetings, potentially make amendments and then have a final vote on the budget on December 15, 2020.

Mr. Callahan stated thanks.

Mr. Reynolds believes that the last budget meeting we have is December 8, 2020.

Ms. Crampsie Smith thought that December 8, 2020 is a backup meeting if necessary.

Mr. Vidoni stated the Final Budget Meeting is Thursday, December 3, 2020 and the backup budget meeting is Tuesday, December 8, 2020 and that is only if any of the previous budget meetings need to be rescheduled.

Mr. Reynolds asked what the schedule is for the Thursday, December 3, 2020 meeting.

Mr. Vidoni remarked that is usually to review amendments if they have come forward.

President Waldron informed the Second and Final Reading of the ordinances will be December 15, 2020.

Mr. Reynolds stated in the past, if at all reasonable, we have tried not to have amendments that we knew we were going to offer at the last reading but rather at the last budget meeting to allow for feedback, comment, whatever it might be rather than bringing something up at the end. He is guessing that the December 3, 2020 meeting, the Final Budget Meeting is when we would be the focus of any amendments we might have to offer.

Mr. Vidoni stated that is correct.

Solicitor Spirk added the other reason for that historically was because you would have to calculate precise numbers to put in the budget book and if you had to do it the same night you were voting on the budget it would be a fast and furious exercise with a calculator for Mark Sivak, Director of Budget and Finance to do those numbers. That is generally the reason that amendments were sought before the final budget vote so that the final book would have the correct numbers.

A. *Bill No. 27-2020 – Adopting the 2021 General Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 27-2020 – Adopting the 2021 General Fund Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2021

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Voting NAY: Mr. Callahan, 1. Bill No. 27-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*B. Bill No. 28-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Water Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 28-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Water Fund Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE WATER FUND BUDGET FOR 2021

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 28-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*C. Bill No. 29-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Sewer Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 29-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Sewer Fund Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE SEWER FUND BUDGET FOR 2021

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 29-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*D. Bill No. 30-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Golf Course Enterprise Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 30-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Golf Course Enterprise Fund Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE GOLF COURSE ENTERPRISE FUND BUDGET FOR 2021

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 30-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*E. Bill No. 31-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Liquid Fuels Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 31-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Liquid Fuels Fund Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE LIQUID FUELS FUND BUDGET FOR 2021

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 31-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*F. Bill No. 32-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Capital Budget for Non-Utilities*

The Clerk read Bill No. 32-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Capital Budget for Non-Utilities, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE 2021 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 32-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*G. Bill No. 33-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Capital Budget for Water Utilities*

The Clerk read Bill No. 33-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Capital Budget for Water Utilities, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE 2021 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR WATER UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 33-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*H. Bill No. 34-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Capital Budget for Sewer Utilities*

The Clerk read Bill No. 34-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Capital Budget for Sewer Utilities, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE 2021 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR SEWER UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 34-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*I. Bill No. 35-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Community Development Block Grant Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 35-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Community Development Block Grant Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,

COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
ADOPTING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
BLOCK GRANT BUDGET FOR 2021

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 35-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*J. Bill No. 36-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Storm Water Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 36-2020 – Adopting the 2021 Storm Water Fund Budget, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE STORM WATER FUND BUDGET FOR 2021

President Waldron stated he will turn to the Administration here. He did say this is a good faith exercise in passing but he was hoping as we look at the Stormwater Fund Budget which is different than what we have seen in different budgets if we could get an update of where we are. He does not believe we received that final ordinance yet, setting up that fund. He is asking for an update where that is and when we might expect that.

Mr. Evans noted there has been a lot of work over the past year but was stalled out a little bit with COVID like everything else. The program itself is coming down the home stretch. The ordinance itself is doing the same, it has gotten a broad overview from our Legal Bureau and we are currently working with the consultants who we have been under contract with for some time. The next meeting is tomorrow morning with the Public Works Department, the Water and Sewer Resources, our IT Department, and members of our Administration to make sure we can get it to Council by next week so that will be on the agenda for the next meeting. Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works can give you additional details or further details on Thursday, November 19, 2020 at the Second Budget Hearing because that agenda includes Public Works, and Water and Sewer Resources. The program is part of the budget as it was last year. It was written into the budget last year and it was initially set to start on July 1, 2020 but the program itself was deferred because of the pandemic.

President Waldron remarked he looks at the ordinance that is in front of us and it is just over \$3 million dollars and it is something we had talked about when David Brong was the Business Administrator. Many other municipalities in the area have done this both regionally and nationally as well. He thinks it is not something that we should ignore or not have a detailed conversation about to see how it affects all stakeholders because as we have been presented with a budget that asks for a 5% tax increase this is also something that will affect people. They will be asked to pay more money to the city for services that they have been using and historically have not been funded properly as well as it does tax non-profits and other large property owners as well asking them to contribute a fair share. President Waldron does think we need to have a more detailed conversation about to refresh everyone's memory because it has been a while since we brought up this subject.

Mr. Evans stated understood and agreed.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. Bill No. 36-2020 was passed on First Reading.

K. *Bill No. 37-2020 – Fixing the 2021 Tax Rate for All City Purposes*

The Clerk read Bill No. 37-2020 – Fixing the 2021 Tax Rate for All City Purposes, sponsored by Ms. Negrón and Ms. Crampsie Smith and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, FIXING  
THE TAX RATE FOR ALL CITY PURPOSES  
FOR THE YEAR 2021

Mr. Callahan related until we get to the budget hearings and he has some amendments that Solicitor Spirk is looking over for him that he wants to try to get into our next Council Meeting as a Communication that might help us alleviate some of what he feels is an overstuffed department in the Community and Economic Development Department. He would like to see us get rid of some of the inspectors in that department since we are already using third party for inspections primarily with Code Master he would hope that with some of the dire information the Mayor talked about for the future. We are looking at tax increases for the next 2 to 3 years the way we are going and at some point we have to stick up for the residents of the city and try to make some additional cuts. When you look at an opportunity for the private sector to pay for these inspections, remember they are the ones who are doing the buildings and the ones that are doing the economic development. He thinks most of them would prefer to go to a third party inspection system and not someone they would pick but someone the city would vet. Let's say we would vet 3 or 4 different companies or engineering firms to do the inspections like Code Master was doing. Mr. Callahan noted that Catasauqua does it with an engineering firm. The opportunity is there for the private sector to pick up that slack. If you talk to the developers or just the Mom and Pops who are trying to put in a patio or a garage, there are extreme delays in our Community and Economic Development Department. We all know the issues we have had in that department over the last couple of years, the mistakes that have been made. Mr. Callahan thinks it is time that we need to move to a different avenue and try to save some revenues. He does not know how many positions they can cut; he is hoping we can cut 2 inspectors. If someone wants to have a garage or patio built we are already sourcing that out to a third party system. We are already doing that. He would just like to have that process ramped up more. Let the developers or the people who are doing the building pay the third party system. We cannot do everything. The numbers that the Mayor just threw out at us as far as our pension bond obligations in the next few years. We are going to be a million dollars short in revenue. We are looking at some serious issues here and at some point we have to make a tough decision. He does not want to put a third party police force out there or have a volunteer fire department so we have to have serious conversations about where can we find areas and avenues to cut and this is one of the areas. That department has had a lot of problems in the last couple of years. If you talk to anybody there are huge delays with getting the permitted process going if you have something you want approved. Mr. Callahan thinks by going to more of a third party system in farming it out which we are already doing according to Ms. Karner, his hope is that we could alleviate at

least 2 inspectors in that department. At this time he is going to vote no on this and hopefully by the next meeting you will all have my amendments to that department. He will be voting no.

Ms. Crampsie Smith noted this is not on this ordinance but forgive her because this is only her second budget. She questions the process. She feels a little unsettled that we are voting on something we have not had the hearings on yet. For example, the stormwater, we are going to talk about that on Thursday. Is this how it has always been? Or is there any other way to get around this. In her mind it would be more appropriate to have the budget hearings from the different departments before we go through the ordinances to vote on so we have more knowledge.

President Waldron remarked in his time on Council this is historically how we have done this because we do have two readings. This first reading is more of a formality to get the ordinance listed for a first reading. We have already had one budget meeting for Public Safety and Economic Development and those were times if someone wanted to make an amendment they would be able to do so. Historically we rush through all of the different departments budgets and simultaneously vote having first reading without making any amendments then those get compiled and potentially there are amendments and that happens before the final reading where we finalize everything we would like amend that gets presented back to the Administration for feasibility as far as how those numbers would work. Then at that last meeting in December we would have second reading where we formally adopt the budget for 2021. This is historically how it works because we do have the practice of having two readings on any ordinance. If we did not have that practice of two readings essentially we would not be going through this formality tonight on voting on something we have not really discussed. If we had just the one meeting we would be having all of our budget meetings having a final budget hearing we would make our amendments and do that sole adoption of the budget at the last meeting in December. This is a formality although it does feel a little uncomfortable because you are committing to something we have not discussed. President Waldron does not know if there is a way around it but he is sure Solicitor Spirk could let us know.

Solicitor Spirk stated that the time pressure historically also comes from the Third Class City Code which calls for the Administration to come up with the budget in November and of course it is difficult to ask them to get a budget prior to then. Because we have had the tradition of the two readings and because the Third Class City Code requires that the budget has to be adopted by the end of December and you do not want to use the time between Christmas and New Year traditionally you have a compressed timeframe over the course of only a few weeks. In order to get both readings in historically the first reading has always been a rather proforma passing it along situation just so we could maintain the timeframe.

Ms. Crampsie Smith stated she understands but because this budget is a lot more challenging than last year's budget that is why she feels a little bit more unsettled. Ideally if we had all the information before we had the first reading it would be great but she understands the time constraints with developing the budget.

President Waldron noted there is also the conversation that has been kicked around behind the scenes for a little bit of does Bethlehem City Council require two readings for an ordinance. The answer to that is depending on who you ask. Historically it has always been

done that way and he imagines Mayor Donchez could go back further than anybody on this subject as far as having two readings on an ordinance.

Mayor Donchez noted when he was elected in 1995 it was two readings and he believes when we started the Mayor/Council form of government in 1961 it was two readings.

President Waldron does not know if that was something that was required or we adopted that and continued that tradition. But that would be another consideration moving forward. Obviously we would not do that this year but there could be a conversation of is there a benefit of having two readings. Sometimes the answer to that is yes because when something gets presented especially when we have something that there might be a lot of public comment and people come out and they want to give their input it may sway Members of Council to make an amendment so they can do that and not have to potentially table something or come back to it when they know they have two or sometimes three weeks so they can make amendments. It forces everyone to be on the same page moving forward knowing you will have the two readings. Historically he thinks it has worked pretty well. Most of the time when we pass an ordinance it goes 7-0 but every once in a while something does come up where he thinks having that second reading is beneficial.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Voting NAY: Mr. Callahan, 1. Bill No. 37-2020 was passed on First Reading.

*L. Bill No. 38-2020 – Wage Equality Ordinance*

The Clerk read Bill No. 38-2020 – Wage Equality Ordinance, sponsored by Mr. Callahan and Dr. Van Wirt and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, COUNTIES OF  
LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON, COMMONWEALTH OF  
PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING NEW ARTICLE 748 OF THE  
CODIFIED ORDINANCES ENTITLED WAGE EQUITY

President Waldron noted before they get into discussion of this he will accept a motion and second to adopt all the amendments recommended by the Human Resources and Environment Committee Meeting that occurred on November 5, 2020 which has been incorporated into the bill before us.

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Callahan made the motion.

Voting AYE on the motion: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Motion passed.

President Waldron noted in front of us we have the amended Bill No. 38-2020 which includes all of the amendments made at the November 5, 2020 Human Resources and Environment Committee Meeting.

Mr. Callahan remarked he had proposed this back on December 13, 2019. The genesis of this came from Massachusetts which was the first State in the Country to do this in August of

2016. They enacted a law prohibiting employers from requiring a prospective employee's wage history. Hypothetically when a woman comes out of let's say Lehigh University and they have a degree and a man comes out of Lehigh University with the same exact degree, generally when men come out of college they are being offered \$10,000 to \$12,000 more a year than a woman coming out of college. When that woman tries to get another job 3 or 4 years down the road that wage inequality keeps following because the employers keep asking them what their prior wage history was. When a business starts going into the interviewing process they know generally how much money they want to budget for a position. If their business picks up and they need to hire someone new they may say they have \$80,000 dollars for a new position. The man comes in and they ask him what he made at his prior job and he says he was making \$70,000 and they offer to him \$78,000 or close to \$80,000, the money they had budgeted for. When the woman comes in with the same credentials and same experience she comes in and says she was making \$65,000 or \$60,000 and based on her prior wage history she is now offered less money for the same exact job. The City of Philadelphia introduced their proposal and that was in 2017 and Rue Landau, the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations said the law was unanimously passed by City Council on 2017. It comes with a variety of worker protection legislation that Philadelphia and many other Cities and States in the United States has implemented in recent years. This one she said should be held up as one that is all about equality in protecting peoples civil rights. Mr. Callahan has never understood the argument against it that is what she said. Comcast and other big time corporations in Philadelphia were very upset at the new law passed to protect women. They filed a lawsuit and it went through federal court and the federal appeals court ruled in favor of the City of Philadelphia and against Comcast. Based on that he took that Philadelphia ordinance and had Solicitor Spirk and a committee of a bunch of women that he knows in the city, some were his sister-in-law who is the ex-Mayor's wife, his daughter, Celeste Dee, and some others. They all helped him get this together. Basically what is attached is a proposed ordinance to establish a new article in the City's Codified Ordinances. The ordinance is designed to combat widespread gender based wage inequalities by prohibiting the employer inquiries into prospective employee wage histories as well as employer reliance on such wage histories for determining compensation. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania women are paid .79 cents for every dollar man makes according to the United States Census Bureau, a 2015 report. Mr. Callahan added that women of color are paid even less, African-American women are paid only .68 cents to a dollar paid to a man, Latinas are only paid .56 cents to a dollar paid to a man and Asian women are paid .81 cents to a dollar paid to a man. The gender wage gap has narrowed by less than one half a penny per year in the United States since 1963 when Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, the first law that was aimed at prohibiting gender based pay discrimination. Since women are paid on the average lower wages than man basing wages upon a workers wage at a previous job only serves to perpetuate the gender wage inequalities and it leaves families especially the woman if the man has left and she is raising the kids on her own. So it is leaving these families with less money to spend on food, housing, and other essential goods and services. The premise of this ordinance is that salary offers should be based upon the specific job responsibilities of a position and not based upon an applicant's prior wage history to avoid the perpetuation of gender wage inequalities. Mr. Callahan stated he wanted to thank Council Members Negrón and Van Wirt. He noted that Dr. Van Wirt added a couple of amendments that he thought were very relevant and he appreciates her work on it and he also appreciates Council Member Negrón for her confidence in moving this to full Council. The federal appeals court had a 67 page unanimous opinion representing the three judge panel that was written by Judge Theodore McKee who wrote that "while the provision does limit employer speech, it is only because the limitation prevents the tentacles of any past wage discrimination from attaching to an



employee's subsequent salary." He thinks what we have here is a very good ordinance. Mr. Callahan stated he is not trying to harm any businesses, he is trying to get women, especially women of color equal pay. If you listen to some of the people who were interviewed on WFMZ when this was first proposed a lot of the businesses said they have no problem with it. That is a good thing. One of the pieces he wanted to add was to have at least a year period from when we passed the ordinance to when it becomes active. He then asked what the usual timeframe for when we pass an ordinance to when it becomes binding.

Solicitor Spirk stated 20 days.

Mr. Callahan had asked the Mayor back in 2019 if there were ways we could get this out and in the business license that goes out every year from the time we vote for it, if this passes, it will be a one year educational piece and it will not be instituted for one full calendar year from the date it was passed by Council. That will provide enough time for us to educate the businesses and the people who are doing business in the City of Bethlehem on our new ordinance. Mr. Callahan added that the lawyers he spoke to stated we will not see many cases at all, if there is it will be 3 or 4 years of people who were not aware of it. By a large population in generality businesses are not going to violate a city ordinance especially something with wage equity when it comes to gender based inequality. Part of why this took so long was thinking how we would implement this or how will this be adjudicated. He asked Solicitor Spirk of that is the correct word.

Solicitor Spirk stated yes.

Mr. Callahan explained if someone is aggrieved he wants them to go to the Bethlehem Human Relations Commission but unfortunately they did not feel it was in their purview to review this. There is no other committee to send this. He was disappointed in that Commission and that is one of the reasons why he voted against that individual last week for her reappointment to the Human Relations Commission. To him there is no reasoning why the Human Relations Commission could not have heard any aggrieved parties that were violated on with this ordinance. What we had to do is he had to go around our own Human Relations Commission and Amy Zanelli, Council Member for Lehigh County and Council Member Tara Zrinski, they were both in favor of this also. Ms. Zrinski came up with a new ordinance that she is proposing to Northampton County and County Councilwoman Zanelli is doing the same for Lehigh County. He spoke to President Heckman from Northampton County, he spoke to Executive McClure and also a few other Council Members from Northampton County. This is budget neutral and will not cost any money. We are just looking for volunteers and he already has a three member panel which is more than enough. He is going to volunteer on it for Northampton County and if anyone else would like to be on this panel that is out there listening tonight you can reach Mr. Vidoni and he can get in touch with me. Mr. Callahan will then put you in contact with the appropriate people that are in Lehigh County or Northampton County. He thinks this will be a great ordinance and hopefully it passes. He wanted to again thank his Human Resources and Environment Committee Members, Olga Negrón and Dr. Paige Van Wirt for their work on this and passing it in committee to full Council.

Dr. Van Wirt informed there is a second part to this ordinance and she will explain. In 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act and the whole point of it was to make sure that people are paid equally. But there have been tons of loopholes through the years. In 1998 a

representative from Connecticut proposed the Paycheck Fairness Act. This has a lot of different parts to it but the main parts are as Councilman Callahan said you cannot ask for wage history in an interview. The second part and this is the part that is the amendment to Councilman Callahan's initial ordinance is that we cannot punish people for sharing their salaries within a company. That is another way of traditionally suppressing wages. There can be no retaliation, no retribution; you cannot put in a contract that someone is prohibited from sharing their wages with anyone else in the company. The third part has to do with disclosure to an overarching body to show that your wages are equal which is really not relevant or doable in a city of Bethlehem's size. The amendment we added was to include the prohibition against retaliation for sharing wages within a company. The biggest difference between these two parts of this ordinance is that one applies to people who are being interviewed and technically do not work for the company. The second part of the amendment is for people who are within a company already and may realize they are not paid equally with the same job as their co-workers because no one is allowed to share salary information. Dr. Van Wirt noted that is the genesis of the second part of this ordinance and the amendment that was approved in committee the other night.

Ms. Crampsie Smith stated kudos to everyone involved, she knows this was a lot of hard work and it took some time to get this passed. She also wanted to mention that she attended that last meeting and the one things we talked about is that even though it says gender wage equality and we talk a lot of about gender being female and male this is going to be relevant to all genders and it even says in there it is inclusive of all genders. We found that the LGBT population is probably more discriminated against wage wise. There are every day more and more gender orientations that we are finding exists. It is important that we are conscious about that with this ordinance.

Mr. Colón informed he appreciates Mr. Callahan bringing this forward. The Human Relations Commission had made its opinion known a few times. It is good that we have a year before this enforced with some of the things that were brought up from the Human Relations Commission, with the Counties looking at developing their own Human Relations Commissions with more resources and potentially have things that are potentially out of the purview of the Bethlehem Human Relations Commission while not overstepping jurisdiction, those things can be worked out. As a whole the ordinance would deter employers from asking potential employees of their wage history. That is the goal of the ordinance. Even if 50% of employees adhere to the ordinance, it probably will be more; once employers are educated about it they will probably not going against the ordinance. From the perspective of the Human Relations Commission we can talk about it being more of an employment labor issue as opposed to a discrimination issue. But at the end of the day what we are trying to do is accomplish wage equality and that moves us in the right direction. We can look to these Counties with the things that are being formed and what those mechanisms will look like. While this would blanket cover the city it would definitely reach its goals and have a positive effect on that process from pre-employment as it relates to wage history. Mr. Colón mentioned to Dr. Van Wirt's amendment this will see positive outcomes citywide.

Mr. Callahan remarked this is his ordinance and he has asked Mr. Vidoni to sign his name as a sponsor to this ordinance.

Mr. Vidoni stated that Mr. Callahan is listed as the prime sponsor of this and that will be reflected in the records. Dr. Van Wirt is listed as the second sponsor.

President Waldron mentioned this was brought up about a year ago and he thinks the reason why it may have taken so long is because the ordinance is flawed. He saw himself and others that had found issue with how it was going to be adopted and moved through the courts and adjudicated. Some of those questions may have been answered but he is not completely convinced and is not sure this will have any effect because he is not sure that anyone will come forward. President Waldron noted Mr. Callahan brought up the number that we may see 3 or 4 of these a year that would come forward. He does not know what that is based on. It might be zero or it might be 100 but we do not have any data to look at to say how this will affect the City of Bethlehem. President Waldron noted he heard some say that the reason this is coming forward is virtue signaling and he is not sure this will have any effect to help the citizens of Bethlehem. He does like the amendment that Dr. Van Wirt brought forward about being able to disclose salary compensation. That might have some effect that is positive to all citizens, not just women in the work place but everyone there to make sure everyone is on the same playing field. He is not sure he would like to support this ordinance as is this evening but he heard there is a majority on Council who think this will help the workers of Bethlehem.

Mr. Callahan added it is not just the City of Bethlehem. Almost every major city in the United States including Alabama has passed a very similar ordinance based off of the Massachusetts and the Philadelphia ordinance. It is out there because it has worked or people believe it is going to work. It is not just a City of Bethlehem thing; it is every major city and progressive city in the United States. He does not want to call Alabama a progressive state but it is hard to believe they did already pass this as law in the State of Alabama.

President Waldron remarked he thinks the difference between the State of Alabama and the City of Bethlehem is that the budget might be a little bit different. He is not sure we have the resources to properly implement something like this currently. It went before the Human Relations Commission and they said they did not have the resources to help, he would agree with them. He also knows that the Human Relations Commission does have a complaint process that allows people to come forward if they feel they are not being treated fairly in the workplace. He asked Mr. Colón if in the past year or two they have had any complaints based on salary compensation in the City of Bethlehem.

Mr. Colón stated no. He has been in the Human Relations Commission which predates his time on City Council. We have had not had any complaints as it relates to employment discrimination in the past two years.

President Waldron queried if that would include compensation, what we are talking about this evening.

Mr. Colón stated that is correct.

Voting AYE on Bill 38-2020 as amended: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, and Ms. Crampsie Smith, 6. Voting NAY: Mr. Waldron, 1. Bill No. 38-2020 was passed on First Reading.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Tower Lease Agreement*

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-198 that authorized to execute an amendment to the City of Bethlehem Tower Lease Agreement between the City of Bethlehem and Allentown SMSA Limited Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless as it relates to the Rodgers and Lewis Streets tower site.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

B. *Approve Contract – WRT – Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study*

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-199 that authorized to execute an agreement with WRT for a pedestrian bridge feasibility study.

Mr. Callahan noted as he stated at the last meeting he is 100% in favor of the concept of the walking pedestrian bridge across the Lehigh. He has seen pictures of other cities who have this and he voted in favor of it in the 2019 or 2018 budget. He is totally in favor of it but the reason he will be voting no on this tonight is because a few years ago we had a booming economy and the Casino revenues were rolling in. We were not in COVID. He noted that Mr. Gallagher called in earlier and Mr. Callahan had some videos he was going to show but he does not have them now. These videos had more people on the bridge, two more than the videos he sent to us today. We have right now on the Hill to Hill Bridge two bike lanes and pedestrian lanes, one on each side. On the Fahy Bridge we have one dedicated and protected by a cement wall and a metal beam. Then there is also a bicycle lane in the right hand lane going in each direction on the Fahy Bridge. He forgot about the Minsi Trail Bridge that has a dedicated and protected by a cement barrier bike path and walking path. Mr. Callahan noted we have three bridges and we have four dedicated bicycle lanes and four dedicated pedestrian lanes and they are all protected by some structural barrier, cement or steel. He is in favor of the concept of this if our finances were in order right now. Because of COVID we have businesses that do not know whether they will be around in three months from now. We had over 6,000 cases today of COVID and in the last week we have had an average of 5,000 cases. It is coming back and coming back with a vengeance. Mr. Callahan stated because of that, as the Mayor stated, we are looking at dire financial times in the next two or three years. We are looking at \$1 million dollars less revenue and we are looking at millions of dollars more in legacy costs with the retirement funds. With all that being said he thinks it is fair to say if we were in a booming economy and we knew where we were going in the next 6 to 7 months and had the money he would be 100% in favor of this pedestrian bridge or at least doing a study. How much this bridge will cost, he heard estimates up to \$3 million dollars. It does not make sense to him in this time right now especially with us getting rid of 3 employees through attrition. We are taking 4 firemen off of the street which will make it harder on an already overburdened fire department. We are taking two SEIU Union member also off. Whether it is through attrition or whatever that is 6 people and 6 positions that are being removed from the city. We are then also asking our city taxpayers for a 5% increase. Mr. Callahan does not know how anybody could vote for this in this day and age right now. We are asking businesses, we are asking residents to make sacrifices. There are senior citizens who do not know where they are going to get the extra 5% for their extra taxes this year and yet we are

going to go spend \$40,000 in city money on a luxury. This is a luxury. Go over there and see how many times on one of those three bridges we have multiple people on those bridges at the same time, even on the nicest days last week. He might have seen two people on a bicycle. We cannot afford a \$40,000 dollar feasibility study. He knows the rest of the money is grant money but the \$40,000 dollars is our city money that could be used in other avenues and for other things. We are in a time of crisis; people do not know where their next paycheck is going to come from. There are businesses on Main Street that do not know if they will survive another shut down or if they will survive until the spring time. Yet, we are thinking and contemplating spending \$40,000 dollars on a pedestrian walking bridge that goes from Sand Island over to the south side which will cost \$2.5 to \$3 million dollars new. Mr. Callahan thinks that is unfathomable that anyone could even consider it now and go back and ask the taxpayers for a 5% increase knowing that our pension liabilities will go up and we will have \$1 million dollars less in tax revenue according to the Mayor. Mr. Gallagher stated this is for aesthetics. Mr. Callahan noted it is not aesthetically nice to ride or jog across the Fahy Bridge, Minsi Trail Bridge or the Hill to Hill Bridge. Again, we have four dedicated paths that are hardly used. We are being asked now to spend \$40,000 dollars of city money on a study that could end up costing us \$3 million; we do not have the money. Anyone who votes for this tonight is out of touch with the reality of our retirees, our businesses, and the taxpayers in our city and what they are facing right now. He will be voting against this tonight and hopes we all come to our senses. He does not know how we can ask the residents for a 5% increase and get rid of 6 people out of our payroll and we are going to spend \$40,000 dollars of city money on a feasibility study for a luxury.

Mr. Reynolds will start by saying that Mr. Callahan clearly has strong feelings about this and if he did not want to spend the money he should not have voted for the Non-Utility Capital Budget 20 minutes ago that includes the funding for 2021 or voted for it last year. It is in there pretty clearly. The money that is in the Non-Utility Capital Fund was approved last year in the budget and is not money that can be spent on employee salaries. This is not like we are comparing apples and oranges here. It is not a situation where we could take that money, it is a one-time expenditure. If you take a look at the Non-Utility Capital Fund on page 267 and you can look at the other expenses there, they are capital expenses and they are not for things like employees. So part of this comes down to our ability to explain to people and also explain the difference between things like the General Fund and the Non-Utility Capital Fund and what the capabilities are and what that money is able to be used for. If people are confused or do not understand that, we need to explain that and that is part of the reason why we have the budget process here. Mr. Reynolds remarked there has been talk about functionality of the potential for a bridge but he thinks it is about a lot more than that. This came through in the dozens and dozens of emails and shows of support that we got for this study in the past week. Those emails were from students, people that have been in Bethlehem a long time, the Chamber of Commerce, the Environmental Advisory Council, and there were multiple emails that listed all of the different organizations that have talked about the concept. This is not something that the 7 of us either started or initiated or came up with ourselves as the only people who support the idea. County Executive McClure in Northampton County spent \$60,000 dollars of County funds because he thought this was a priority. Mr. Reynolds added the DCNR at the State thought this was a priority for \$40,000 dollars and our funds that we put in there, the \$40,000 dollars was not just because we thought this project was a good idea. This is about a vision and creativity for our city and this process has been going on for several years where organizations throughout the city and individuals have sat at meetings and talked about what we can do. The Hoover Mason Trestle cost \$17 million dollars in TIF dollars and that does not move anybody in a way that they could

not walk down the street. The idea is when you are thinking about how you would make your city different and how you encourage the citizens to believe in a different type of city, what can you have that other cities do not have. Those projects do not fall out of the sky. Mr. Reynolds does not know if this is going to happen, and if it is something that will come back and necessarily make sense. One of the things that we are voting on tonight is whether or not we will encourage people to come out and be part of proactive processes and then we give them our word, not only at meetings but when we pass budgets and put together committees to study requests for proposals. We take all these different ideas in about sustainability, and other things. Mr. Reynolds noted he does a fair amount of walking and riding his bike across those bridges as well and he can say from the functionality point of view, there is not a lot of room there. That is beside the point right now. This is about encouraging us to think about how we can add things to our city that rely on a different type of city and vision for what we can be and the idea of bringing that along with the possibility that you might build something. He is sorry but studies do not include people taking videos of how many people are on a bridge at a certain time that is not what works. It is also not because people are not crossing a path on a bridge that is saying we should not consider some other way to get people across the river. That is like saying if a restaurant is on 123 Main Street you should not replace it with a different restaurant because the first restaurant failed. It is about how we take a look at moving around our city and connecting the south side and the north side. Mr. Reynolds thinks above all that this is about whether or not we will value people that want to be part of the process of doing things in our city and our community that are proactive, visionary, and are creative. We have a lot of different brands in the city, whether or not it is the Christmas City, or Steel Stacks, or the Hoover Mason Trestle, we have a lot of things that we look at and you could say the functionality of that is not the most important thing. This is the character that it gives our city. Mr. Reynolds believes we need to be honest about what this conversation is about. It is a complete false equivalency to try to say that if we do not spend this \$40,000 dollars in the Non-Utility Capital Fund which we voted on last year and just 20 minutes ago 7-0 for with no discussion that somehow those promises are not ones that need to be kept. We can take a look at what we want to do in the General Fund budget and he has no issue in looking at different things to cut there. But to try to compare it is like a few years ago when there was the discussion that we could lower taxes if we do something with the Golf Course which also could not happen because it was a separate fund. All we do by putting information out there is add misinformation and say why are we doing this when we are not doing that. That is just an irresponsible way to go about these conversations. It was very telling that in the last week and a half from what he believes was one email from Mr. Roy sent out to people that we got a lot of passionate emails and calls, not just from citizens but organizations that felt passionately about the potential and the worth. He would respectfully disagree about how many people out there think it is at least worth looking at. We are not saying today that this is something that is going to fund but other branches and levels of government, the County, State, the City last year, the City this year, the Administration, have all said this is something we should take a look at because it is important to the people of Bethlehem. Mr. Reynolds will vote for this tonight because it is important and big things do not just happen to fall out of the sky or you do them when they come along for the budget, you have to plan for them. Sometimes you have to have a little bit of vision.

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked if anyone knows if there is a deadline on when the grant from the DCNR will expire if it is not used.

Mr. Evans stated he does not know the expiration date but he can check on that.

Ms. Crampsie Smith informed she is all for the pedestrian bridge, she loves to walk and bike as do many of the people she knows. She does have concerns because we are in a pandemic and there are many people suffering and she feels while the bridge would be an awesome thing for our community it is not a necessity. She has given this a lot of thought and has been torn by it. The one thing that turned her around in leaning toward approving this is that while many people thought before the pandemic it was needed there seems to be many more people in favor of it. Also she is concerned that we already have the money earmarked and are we going to lose the grant money which is a lot of money and significant. Ms. Crampsie Smith mentioned Jim Thorpe had put in their pedestrian bridge a year ago which many people may be familiar with, that is the area where she was born and grew up in. Her brother and her friends were elected officials who were very involved in having that bridge come to fruition. The good thing about that bridge is they did not have to use county funds, it was totally grant funded and when they got into a problem with the Borough of Jim Thorpe, on the property they had some issue that they had to fix, they were able to use a hotel tax fee from the tourist promotion agency to put \$50,000 in this. That was the only money that was not grant funded and it was through the hotel tax. The bottom line was no money came out of the county budget for that bridge. It is \$4 million dollar bridge and it took 25 years. But again, she knows many friends and family members who have used it this past summer and it has been really used heavily and everyone has been raving about it. Ms. Crampsie Smith added her concern is if this were not during a pandemic and times were really going great as they had been in the past few years she has no hesitation. She does feel a bit hesitant because she looks at when things are rough we need to tighten our belts and we are in a pandemic and many businesses are suffering. She has given this a lot of thought and is leaning towards voting yes. The other thing she thought of if we can table this until we get through the budgetary process. That way we can find out what the deadline is for the grants. If we do not use it when will it expire? She made the motion to table this until we get to the budgetary process so we can take time to find out what this will look like as far as a grant, what is the deadline we have to use the grant money before it expires.

Mr. Callahan stated he seconds that motion and he would also ask that we not only find out what we can do with the grant money but what else can we do with the \$40,000 of taxpayer dollars. He agrees with Mr. Reynolds, there is a place and time for a vision. If you look back at his brother, Mayor John Callahan's Administration much of that all happened under his watch. No one is more in favor of moving the city along and being a progressive city. But as Councilwoman Crampsie Smith said, we are in difficult times right now.

Solicitor Spirk noted the motion to table is not debatable.

Mr. Callahan asked if there is another time to speak.

President Waldron stated after the vote.

Voting AYE on the motion to table: Mr. Callahan, and Ms. Crampsie Smith, 2. Voting NAY: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Colón, and Mr. Waldron, 5. The motion to table failed 5-2.

President Waldron stated we can now move on discussion on the resolution.

Mr. Colón informed he will be supporting this tonight, just moving forward in something that we had previously discussed. This process as many of us know has been a conversation that has gone on for many years. He remembers that initial meeting at the Ice House over 2 years ago that many of us were there when there was a presentation about similar projects in other cities and some of the energy that was behind this from different community groups and individuals. Given that we have already secured these funds, that is a \$140,000 dollar contract with \$40,000 dollars coming from us which was previously budgeted and this would be step one in what would be a very long process. He does not know how long a process this would take to see something like this come to fruition but we need a jumping off point. In theory he thinks this project is great. Of course the devil is always in the details but we will not know what those details are without having this feasibility study done and looking at that information and going from there. So does he support the bridge, in theory yes and does he support looking at the bridge and the feasibility of the bridge, without question. He did during previous discussions and will continue to tonight. It is important for us to at least get the study done to then see what moving forward would look like and get a plan from there. Mr. Colón remarked there has been reference tonight of how we budgeted this previously and where these funds come from. There was reference to raising taxes. This is his fifth budget season and we have raised taxes incrementally every year except one. This is not something new the raising of taxes and then nitpicking at this \$40,000 dollars that is going into the study. Then also not to jump around the budget but look at any given Council Meeting where are about to vote on a contract for traffic improvements for over \$100,000 after this. It is not as if this contract is one of one and we do not have dozens of contracts that come before us. Mr. Colón is all in favor of always providing feedback, conversation scrutiny for anything that comes before Council. We all have equal opportunity to give our thoughts. But as it relates to this from his standpoint this is something he has supported previously, he will gladly continue to support tonight.

Ms. Negrón echoes what Councilman Colón has said but more so what Councilman Reynolds said so eloquently and shared the process of the story. She knows we have been talking about this for years. We have listened to the community and had community meetings. The Administration has gotten the funding, matching funds in terms of grants. If we do not use this grant, Councilwoman Crampsie Smith asked about the timeframe, but it can only be used for this. Then this will go back to the county. This is \$40,000 dollars and how can this make a big difference in our budget if we do not do this. First of all, we owe it to the people of Bethlehem. We are their voices and they have been talking about it and this is what they want. Ms. Negrón believes they have done a good job finding support for the businesses and individuals for rent assistance. She knows the city allocated some CDBG money for New Bethany Ministries and they have been giving out money for individuals that are struggling with rent assistance. They are not ignoring everything else with COVID. This needs to be done; we have talked about this and have been voting in favor of it. We cannot just stop right now. She will of course be supporting this tonight.

Dr. Van Wirt stated it is really unfortunate that Councilman Callahan did not apply his surgical analysis of economic development needs of Bethlehem and the outrage he feels over COVID affecting our city to the \$174,000 dollars that was voted for from the county economic funds for the Golf Course to pay for some mowing machines a month ago. So this outrage feels very displaced. She did want to correct some mischaracterizations that Councilman Callahan made. She then read a list of organizations in the city who have fully endorsed this pedestrian bridge project feasibility study. The reason they have endorsed this it are not because we are



having such a hard time, which we are, walking across the three bridges. Those places he mentioned by the way are for pedestrians only. Bicycles on the Minsi Trail and the Fahy Bridge, they are not allowed on those pedestrian walkways and they are dangerous places where they are allowed. The list starts with The City of Bethlehem Health Department, CACLV, Gatherers and Wellness Committee of South Side Vision, The CAT, Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, Moravian College, Northampton Community College, Backyards for Wildlife, MANA, the Sierra Club, Lehigh University South Side Initiative, ArtsQuest, The Bethlehem EAC, New Bethany Ministries, Community Bike Works, Touchstone Theatre, Alliance for Sustainable Communities, Bethlehem Partnership for a Healthy Community, Delaware Valley Green Building Council Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania Pedalcycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Renew Lehigh Valley, Delaware and Lehigh Canal Heritage Corridor, Discover Lehigh Valley, Appalachian Mountain Club, Social Impact Center, Godfrey Daniels, Delaware and Lehigh National Corridor and the Ice House tonight program. The reason they support this is not because of the walking issues, it is because pedestrian bridges are economic engines and that is the vision that Councilman Reynolds referred to tonight. It is how do we provide for an economic engine for this city. Dr. Van Wirt informed the other misconception she wanted to clear up is that the majority of pedestrian bridges are not paid for by the citizens of the cities where they are built, they are paid for with federal alternative transportation grants. There is also county money that is available to help pay for it through the hotel taxes. This is not something that we would be asking the citizens of Bethlehem to pay for in any way. This is a \$40,000 dollar investment and she hopes we can keep our perspective on what \$40,000 dollars means. Exactly to Mr. Colón's point that we are voting tonight on so many other things that she hopes we can put our vision hats on there and say what can we bring to Bethlehem, what can we provide for this city to grow in the future we want to see. She will be supporting this tonight. She also would like to say that she spent a lot of time, over 5 hours in a few weeks interviewing four different businesses that have experience in building pedestrian bridges. They are the people who help us find sources of money and the people who help surmount the huge problems like how do we go over a railroad, how do we go from banks to banks that have unequal footing. These are companies that are experienced in doing this and that is why we are paying them to say if this is possible and if it is possible then how do we pay for it. She will be supporting this tonight.

Ms. Crampsie Smith noted in reference to Councilwoman Negrón's comment about who cares what matters as far as the grant goes, she thinks it is important to get the specific information regarding this grant, especially the deadline. That is because if the deadline is in the long term and not the short term that can make a difference given that we are in a pandemic and money is tight. This would help her with her decision. She wanted to clarify that quite frankly it is not very appropriate to question why she would question the deadline for the grant.

President Waldron remarked he was able to get some information from Ms. Karner that the county grant expires on 12/31 of this year. There is the option to get an extension into next year because the county was on the committee for that. That is something we can do but the timeline is tight on this for the county money that is a large portion of the funds. The \$40,000 dollars also is not in our General Fund, it is in the Capital Fund, meaning we cannot take that \$40,000 dollars and plug a hole in order to pay for a salary or pay for pension costs or anything in that regard. We could take that money and put it towards potentially street overlays, something that is in the Capital Fund, but we could not take that money and use it to potentially save any positions in the budget or to offset a potential tax increase.

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked when the DCNR grant expires.

President Waldron stated he does not have that information.

Ms. Crampsie Smith thanked President Waldron and added that helps a lot to know that the grant for the county will expire at the end of the year.

Mr. Callahan thinks if you look over the years these grants are always available and when times are good in a few years down the road those grants will be available again. He did support this and he does not know why anybody thinks he did not. He did vote for this originally a few years ago but we are in different times right now. All would agree that we are in unprecedented times. He supported the bridge in the past when the economy was good but times are different now. We will lose 4 firefighters and that does not matter to anybody. We just got rid of 2 SEIU employees and that does not matter to anybody. He added that Mr. Reynolds is going to raise taxes for probably the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> time that he has been on Council and he is going to raise it another 5%. When do the taxpayers of Bethlehem get a break? People are struggling right now and businesses on Main Street are struggling. Some of our most popular and successful businesses on Main Street do not know if they can make it until May. For us to bump up a 5% tax increase, he thinks it is disgusting and a bad image and a perception that we are going to go spend \$40,000 dollars or taxpayer money, he is not talking about the grant money from the county. We are going to spend \$40,000 dollars in taxpayer money on a bridge that is going to go nowhere for the next 3 or 4 years. Mr. Callahan pointed out if you listen to the Mayor tonight, our pension obligations in the next few years are astronomical and we have \$1 million dollars less in revenue projected next year. The pedestrian bridge in Jim Thorpe cost \$4 million dollars, where will we come up with that money. This is wasted money right now. He supported this when times were good but we are struggling and businesses are struggling. He does not know how you can go out in public and answer to people after spending \$40,000 dollars on a bridge to nowhere.

Mr. Reynolds would again bring up that he guesses the past was 20 minutes ago when we all voted for the Non-Utility Capital Budget 7-0. As far as businesses are concerned, he does not think anybody here does not understand the pain. Part of the reason why he is okay for voting for this tonight is because the DBA and the Chamber are in favor of it. They were in favor of it in the past and again today when we got the email and in the phone calls he has gotten. As Dr. Van Wirt stated this is an economic engine. If this is ever going to happen it will not likely to be built using city taxpayer funds as a majority, it will come from state or federal grants or county grants or from other potential grant sources in the future. Mr. Reynolds noted if we went to Northampton County Executive McClure and said we came to you and we asked for help and now we are not sure and can we put this off for a year or so. A year or two then down the road when there is potential other grant money that is the type of thing that give hesitation about giving it to a city who does not have their ducks in a row. Mr. Reynolds thinks it is important to say that whatever conversations we want to have about employees there is a time and place to have those. The Mayor's budget was referenced and it is included in the Mayor's 2021 budget in the Non-Utility Capital Fund, it was not taken out. The Administration was the one that put together these committees to review these proposals that Dr. Van Wirt referenced before. This is not about whether or not we support these other things whether it is pandemic related relief or whatever. Last meeting we had passed a resolution where he encouraged that \$1.3 billion dollars be given to the counties to be able to give to small businesses. Those are conversations that are

going on constantly about how we are able to help. Once again, this is trying to compare apples and oranges and trying to create a false equivalency here and it just does not work and it does not make any sense. No matter times you repeat the same points over and over it is not the same thing.

Mr. Callahan stated he voted against the General Fund Budget and also the Tax Rate for all City Purposes.

Mr. Reynolds informed Mr. Callahan did not vote against the Non-Utility Capital Fund and this is included in that.

Mr. Callahan added he also voted against the General Fund Budget. He asked Mr. Reynolds how many times he raised taxes on people in his time in office.

Mr. Reynolds remarked that no one takes Mr. Callahan seriously right now so please just move on.

Mr. Callahan asked when do the taxpayers of the city get a break. He noted that Mr. Reynolds is acting like it is only \$40,000 and is no big deal. This is \$40,000 dollars and we have roads we need to fix. At some point we have to help and we are in a world pandemic and you are throwing \$40,000 dollars out the window. Mr. Callahan stated he is done with this and he hopes that you can answer to the residents of the city.

President Waldron asked Mr. Callahan what he proposes to do with that \$40,000 dollars that we are able to do within the Capital Budget.

Mr. Callahan would like to see it go to where we can spend it on, things we need. We have roads that are falling apart. He pointed out that Mr. Alkhal is constantly talking about the fact that we have a lack of funds for overlay. He does not know if this can be used for sidewalks. But it is \$40,000 dollars. We are in a pandemic and he noted that President Waldron is a business man and he knows what is going on out there and how businesses are struggling.

President Waldron stated he knows.

Mr. Callahan informed he was for this bridge and he voted for it before.

President Waldron stated we heard Mr. Callahan's comments before this evening multiple times. He would just try to move the conversation forward slightly by saying if you do not want to spend this \$40,000 dollars on the bridge study which he has in the past supported including earlier tonight when we passed the Capital Utility Budget with that money in there. Maybe Mr. Callahan could make an amendment to move that to something else as opposed to talking about downtown businesses and how people are hurting because we cannot take that \$40,000 dollars and put that to small businesses, we cannot take that \$40,000 dollars and try to reduce that 5% tax increase that was proposed by the Administration. If you want to have a solution to that \$40,000 dollars it has to be within that framework of the Capital Budget.

Mr. Callahan asked Mr. Evans what priorities we have within that fund. He knows \$40,000 dollars is not a lot for overlays and that we probably need \$1 million dollars or more in

that but there are other things that this could be used for besides a bridge study in the middle of a pandemic.

President Waldron suggested this might be a conversation he and Mr. Evans could have before our next Council Meeting when we talk about the budget specifically.

Mr. Callahan stated he wanted to make an amendment that we table the \$40,000 dollars until we hear the top priorities from Mr. Alkhal in that budget.

President Waldron remarked Mr. Callahan made the motion.

Mr. Callahan stated he did, to take that \$40,000 dollars out. He is sure we can go back to whoever is doing that study and tell them we can still use the grant money. His motion is to pull the \$40,000 dollars out for now until we hear from Mr. Alkhal on what else it could be used for within that budget legally.

Solicitor Spirk remarked he does not think that is in order now because you are still discussing the vote on the approving of the contract. So to move to table some other issue would not be in order now.

President Waldron related we are not discussing the Capital Budget currently because we already voted on that this evening and that passed 7-0. He thinks on Thursday night when we talk about the budget for the Capital Budget that might be the opportunity to talk to Mr. Alkhal who has a little more information and knowledge about where that money could go to and how he thinks it could be prioritized differently if that is the will of Council.

Mr. Callahan asked by voting for this right now is that securing the city money? We have \$100,000 in grant money; he is not talking about that. He is sure that everyone on Council can agree that we are in dire times right now and we can find a better use of \$40,000 dollars in taxpayer money to use in something else in the city. He will have a conversation with Mr. Alkhal and get back to this on Thursday night.

Mr. Reynolds believes the \$40,000 in the city is a match for those grants so those grants cannot exist unless the city provides that match which we have mentioned multiple times before in previous conversations.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Voting NAY: Mr. Callahan, 1. The Resolution passed.

C. *Approve Contract – Armour & Sons Electric, Inc. – Traffic Signal Upgrades Price Increase*

Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Negrón sponsored Resolution No. 2020-200 that authorized to execute a contract price increase with Armour & Sons Electric, Inc. for the Traffic Signal Upgrades.

Mr. Reynolds noted President Waldron had mentioned this at our last meeting when we talked about the patio that was in the historic district and we had a long conversation about that 20 to 25 minutes and then we approved a different contract for over \$1 million dollars with almost no questions. No one asked if we could go back and do the bids or how many people bid

and so on and so forth. We often take the process that has been followed by the Administration when they come to us with these particular contracts, whether it is \$50,000 dollar, \$200,000 dollars, or \$500,000 dollars because we know that there is been an internal process that has been followed. It also strikes him as disingenuous that there can be that conversation over this \$40,000 dollar as far as what it means and we have had this conversation before and yet there are other parts of the budget that as President Waldron and Mr. Colón mentioned before that we necessarily say, here is \$800,000 for the storm water fixing this intersection. He does want to put this in perspective as far as how much we are talking about here in comparison to these other projects. Mr. Reynolds just thinks this needs to be mentioned and we probably should mention it more often when we have long conversations about some of these things that get tied up in different arguments as to where they fit in to with the overall scope of the budget.

Voting AYE: Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Crampsie Smith, and Mr. Waldron, 7. The Resolution passed.

#### 11. NEW BUSINESS

##### *Parklets/Bethlehem Affordable Housing Task Force*

Ms. Crampsie Smith thanked Mayor Donchez and everyone in the city for all they have done for the businesses and especially for considering extending the parklets through December. Hopefully the weather will be okay but it is great that the Christmas City will have the parklets and hopefully keep things alive on the north and south side. She also mentioned that it has been known that she is passionate about our housing crisis in our country and our city. She has been meeting people throughout the state regarding the state of homelessness and the housing crisis in our city and getting some ideas. Ms. Crampsie Smith recently in the past few months has been meeting with Alan Jennings from the Community Action Committee and Alicia Karner from our Economic Development office. We decided that the best way to tackle it right now is to form a Housing Task Force so we are going to have our first meeting of the Bethlehem Affordable Housing Task Force tomorrow. The members of the Task Force are going to include Mike Perrucci from Peron Development, Neal Koplín, Regional President of People's Security and Trust, Dana Hanchin, CEO of Mid Atlantic, HDC, Alan Jennings, Becky Bradley from the Planning Commission, Dennis Benner, and Alicia Karner. Ms. Crampsie Smith noted our hope is that we can look at how we can address the issue of the lack of affordable housing and rental properties within the City of Bethlehem. Right now in the City of Bethlehem 50.1% of Bethlehem residents are cost burdened, meaning they are paying more than 30% of their income on rent and on the south side that is even more, up to 60%-69% of people are cost burdened. We hope that we can with this group get good ideas to tackle this issue and we hope to have some ideas by the end of April, 2021 to bring to the table.

##### *Pinebrook Family Answers*

Ms. Negrón stated she wanted to share that she had a really good meeting yesterday with Mayor Donchez and Police Chief Michelle Kott. A good friend of hers Bill Vogler who is the CEO of Pinebrook Family Answers has been trying to reach out to our former Police Chief for a while and was not successful because he wanted to share a program that they have been doing for a years now with the Allentown Police Department. They have case workers that work for Pinebrook and are in contract with the City of Allentown Police Department and doing

wonderful work. He wanted to share that and he believes that tomorrow Chief Kott and the Director of the Health Bureau, Kristen Wenrich and a few of the other members of the Administration will meet with Bill Vogler to talk about this work. This started with one case worker and she believes that now they will have 3 or 4 because it has worked so well with the Allentown Police Department. She wanted to share that and she is looking forward to hear from the Administration about the possibilities of working with a great organization that is doing case work and have counseling, not just mental health but also drug and alcohol.

*Pedestrian Bridge*

Mr. Callahan thanked Councilwoman Crampsie Smith for some commonsense and a rational thought process in looking at this pedestrian bridge. He would ask everybody out there who is watching, including the public, if they think the city should be spending \$40,000 dollars on a bridge to nowhere that will not be built for years to come. Mr. Callahan was all for the Hoover Mason Trestle, that was paid for by the TIF money, not taxpayer money. It was taxes that the Sands Casino paid, but that was not taxpayer money. The economy then also was booming. He would ask all the residents of Bethlehem if you have an issue with the city spending \$40,000 dollars on a feasibility study for a walking pedestrian bridge in these hard economic times and the pandemic, they should reach out to Mr. Vidoni, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Waldron and Dr. Van Wirt and explain to them your frustration of a 5% tax increase, losing public safety officials, and 2 SEIU workers. Until you speak up that is the only thing they will listen to. You will get tax increases after tax increases after tax increases for the next 3 to 4 years just based off of the comments from the Mayor tonight. Mr. Callahan added that Mr. Reynolds has continuously raised taxes. He would ask everyone to reach out to the City Clerk and ask the City Clerk to forward your emails to those Council Members.

Mr. Reynolds would like to have the record show that he is laughing at most of what Mr. Callahan has to say. But he would also want to point out that people have reached out to us over the past couple of weeks about the pedestrian bridge. He added that Dr. Van Wirt just read a long, long list of organizations that support the pedestrian bridge which is essentially almost every single institution in the City of Bethlehem. He would also say that the way the TIF works as far as Tax Increment Financing Zone is that it is in the title of Tax Increment Financing that there is a baseline for what those properties were taxes at and then there is a bond taken out and that bond is paid off with taxpayer dollars as far as the increase in the value. Then at one point in the middle of his brother, Mayor John Callahan's Administration that deal was actually re-engineered in order to create a different amount of taxpayer dollars to go pay off the taxpayer dollar paid for Hoover Mason Trestle. So that was a lot more taxpayer dollars as in \$17 million taxpayer dollars that created something that people love in the City of Bethlehem. We are talking about spending \$40,000 dollars of money that cannot be spent in the General Fund. It is in the Non-Utility Capital Fund. Metaphorically, symbolically, it might feel like it is General Fund dollars but is not General Fund dollars.

Mr. Callahan interjected that it can be spent on roads.

Mr. Reynolds pointed out it can be spent on roads and he would entertain that there are some people in the city that do not own a driving school and that walk places and ride their bikes places. But yes, it could be spent on roads.

Mr. Callahan added he does not know why Mr. Reynolds would assume that he is the only one that uses the roads in the City of Bethlehem and think that our roads are in need of repairs. Anyway, he was in favor of the bridge and he works with the DBA and he supports all of them. There is nobody more pro-business on this Council than he is. He has never voted against an economic development project, he is pro-business. So if you try to pin him to a wall that he is not for the DBA and businesses and economic development that is insane. But to raise taxes by 5% again on all of our residents and businesses when they are struggling and some of you were laughing when he talked about this and just blow that money on the bridge. This is a big deal and it is more of a perception. We are spending \$40,000 dollars of city taxpayer money on a bridge to nowhere. Mr. Callahan added that it is not going to be built right now, we do not have the money, and this is a luxury. There are too many needs right now and if you guys cannot see that it boggles his mind.

*Administrative Order/Happy Thanksgiving*

Mr. Colón stated Ms. Hefferan appreciates the support on her appointment tonight. As the numbers continue to rise with COVID and with the holiday season coming up he wishes everyone a Happy Thanksgiving as some of us are spending them away from our families and loved ones.

*Christmas Tree Lighting*

President Waldron then asked how the tree lighting ceremony is happening this year and if it will be typical.

Mayor Donchez replied no, it will be virtual and the turning on of the lights will be the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, not Friday. We will be providing the information.

Mr. Callahan wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 pm.

ATTEST:

Robert G. Vidoni, Esq.  
City Clerk