

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

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

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

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

April 7, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Mark Will-Weber

Mr. Will-Weber was told by an acquaintance that she cannot afford to park near the downtown restaurant where she works because of high parking fees both in the public garage and at meters. He knows that Council does not set these parking fees but wanted to publicly air this concern.

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer proposed restructuring federal income tax regulations. A new \$1 million tax bracket would be taxed at a rate of 50 percent. He further proposed that if that taxpayer donated his entire income above the \$1 million threshold to charity, that the balance would not be taxed. In effect, the federal government would be giving a matching grant to a charity chosen by the taxpayer.

Martin Romeril

Mr. Romeril invited the public to the Bethlehem Garden Club's Arbor Day Celebration on Payrow Plaza at 1 PM on April 24.

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

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer observed that agenda Item 6 F involves a grant application for up to \$250,000 for work associated with three parks. There is a lack of transparency because the provided information does not include details on planned changes.

Martin Romeril

Mr. Romeril addressed agenda Item 10 A regarding intermunicipal liquor license transfers. He referred to February 17, 2004 minutes in which Council President Micheal Schweder raised concerns over transferring liquor licenses to City businesses. While the initial process is scrutinized, the City would not have a say in the successor business if that license were to be sold. The City would only have oversight rights related to zoning regulations. He also noted that there is no requirement for the applicant to list restricted institutions, such as schools, within 300 feet of the property and implied he believed there should be.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics said there were only three members of the public present tonight and disagreed with holding to the five-minute time limit for public comment as limited under Council Rules. Judgement should be exercised.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

President Leon

Ms. Leon observed that Mr. Will-Weber was no longer present, but she noted that the Bethlehem Parking Authority's next public meeting will be on April 22. He might wish to address parking-related comments there. She added that a merchant parking pass is available for downtown employees. This might be of help.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan said he contacted Northampton County District Attorney Stephen Baratta asking him about the laws related to the arrest several months ago of the City's former Right-to-Know officer, Zachary Cole-Borghi. Mr. Callahan was concerned that the former employee may have improperly accessed police reports outside of his Open Records Officer role. Mr. Baratta responded that he would not get involved unless there is evidence of improper access or if Bethlehem police request assistance with an investigation.

Police Chief Michelle Kott agreed that she would want to know if improper access was gained but that she could not elaborate more because a criminal investigation remains open

involving this former employee's illegal drug-related charges including activities associated with City Hall. She later offered that Lehigh County sifted through its investigation and advised that it would not be reviewing whether Mr. Cole-Borghgi improperly accessed records but that Northampton County could do so if it chose. Chief Kott said Northampton County within the past month said it would investigate this aspect.

Mr. Callahan said Council should have been advised of this detail, perhaps in executive session, especially since he raised the question months ago after the arrest.

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. said an update would not have been appropriate because of the ongoing criminal investigation. He also said that, while police are investigating the records access aspect, the City Human Resources Department is not at this time. He added that Mr. Cole-Borghgi has been fired from his position so, from an employment standpoint, what more could Human Resources do if improper access were to be found?

Mr. Callahan also said that Mayor Reynolds must be held accountable for hiring Mr. Cole-Borghgi. City Council has heard nothing from the Mayor or his administration.

Mayor Reynolds said review has been taking place by various law enforcement agencies but remains secret because it is under investigation. He added that Mr. Cole-Borghgi was terminated when first arrested but other details of his employment will not be discussed because of threatened litigation by Mr. Cole-Borghgi.

Mr. Colón said the update that Mr. Callahan was seeking involves a sensitive criminal matter that has not yet been adjudicated. He added that the contents of confidential memos and executive sessions leak out, so he believed confidentiality to be appropriate until the conclusion of the investigation.

President Leon offered that what Mr. Cole-Borghgi may have done is a reflection on himself and not on the City of Bethlehem. She added that immediate employment termination was decisive action taken by the City.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *City Clerk – Liquor License Transfer – Requirements – Revised Resolution*

The City Clerk's Office recommended repealing and replacing Resolution 2012-114 to increase the cost from \$200 to \$500 when applying to the City for approval of an Intermunicipal Liquor License Transfer. – Item 10 A.

B. *Director of Public Works – 2026 25 Fourth of July Fireworks – American Fireworks Company*

Director Michael Alkhal recommended an Agreement for \$35,000 with American Fireworks Company to provide the annual Fourth of July fireworks show. – Item 10 B.

C. *Director of Water and Sewer Resources – 2026 26 Penn Forest Debris Basin Engineering – Memo – Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC*

Director Edward Boscola recommended an Agreement with Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC to provide engineering services for the rehabilitation of the Penn Forest Debris Basin at a cost of \$31,560. – Item 10 C.

D. *City Solicitor – Authorizing Deed – 8 Mechanic Street*

Assistant City Solicitor Matthew Deschler recommended a deed that would allow the City to retain ownership of 8 Mechanic Street and place covenants with certain restrictions in accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Northampton County agreements. – Item 10 D.

E. *City Solicitor – ArtsQuest – 2026 Levitt Pavilion Concert Series*

Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with ArtsQuest for the 2026 Levitt Pavilion Concert Series most weekends May 15 through September 12. – Item 10 E.

F. *Grants Administrator, Community and Economic Development – Memo – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources C2P2 2026*

Lori Gilio sought approval to seek a grant through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources of up to \$250,000 to be used for the development of plans for improving Sand Island, Saucon Park, and Monocacy Park if received. – Item 10 F.

G. *Director of Planning and Zoning – 2025 24 Complete Streets Bike Infrastructure – Amendment 1 – CF041526*

Director of Planning and Zoning Cathy Fletcher recommended Amendment 1 to contract 2025 24 Complete Streets Bike Infrastructure with Kittelson & Associates. This amendment would study and evaluate adding improvements along Stefko Boulevard to the original scope of the study at an added cost of \$124,936. – Item 10 G.

H. *Director of Water and Sewer Resources – Memo – Records Destruction*

Director Edward Boscola sought approval for records destruction in accordance with the Municipal Records Retention Act. A Resolution will be placed on the May 5 agenda.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

B. *Mayor*

Mayor Reynolds reported on his April 8 “State of the City” address. A highlight was the provided summary of how far Bethlehem has come financially as a city from the bleak times when Bethlehem Steel Corp. closed and progress made in public-private collaboration toward housing.

C. *Committee Chairs*

Ms. Laird – Parks and Recreation Committee

Ms. Laird announced the Parks and Recreation Committee will meet at 5:30 PM on May 5 in Town Hall to review the draft version of the 40 in 10 Parks Plan.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8 A. *Bill No. 18-2026 – Budget Adjustments – Liquid Fuels Fund*

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

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

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Bill No. 18-2026, now known as Ordinance No. 2026-18, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – Liquor License Transfer – Requirements – Revised Resolution*

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized to repeal and replace Resolution 2012-114 involving liquor license transfers to increase the fee from \$200 to \$500 to cover legal advertisement and administrative costs and continue the practices of conspicuous property posting and notification of property owners within 500 feet of the premises.

President Leon clarified that this matter does not involve a particular liquor license transfer but instead involves amending the resolution governing some aspects of the process, specifically increasing the application fee.

Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward further explained that this resolution details what an applicant must submit to the City for processing their application. It does not address the requirements of an application, which are governed by the state. The primary proposed change is to increase the fee from \$200 to \$500 to cover increased required advertising costs to notify the public.

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-065 passed.

B. Approve Resolution – 2026 25 Fourth of July Fireworks – American Fireworks Company

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Agreement with American Fireworks Company to provide the Fourth of July fireworks show. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-066 passed.

C. Approve Resolution – 2026 26 Penn Forest Debris Basin Engineering – Van Cleef Engineering Associates

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Agreement with Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC for engineering services to rehabilitate the Penn Forest Debris Basin. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-067 passed.

D. Approve Resolution – Authorizing Deed – 8 Mechanic Street

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Execute deed for 8 Mechanic Street that would maintain City ownership and add covenants restricting the property to recreational uses.

City Solicitor Spirk said certain covenants were placed on properties obtained under the Greenway acquisition. Some affected business owners have sought approvals to permit certain activities on their properties that the covenants prohibited. These were not objectionable to the City, so it was suggested that a “land swap” of sorts could be conducted whereby newly added adjacent land could carry these covenants in exchange for the removal of covenants on certain existing sections.

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-068 passed.

E. Approve Resolution – Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – 2026 Levitt Pavilion Concert Series

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Agreement with ArtsQuest to execute a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Levitt Pavilion Concert Series. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-069 passed.

F. Approve Resolution – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – C2P2 2026

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized to apply for a grant through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Ms. Laird sought to clarify the earlier public comment regarding a lack of transparency on this matter. Mayor Reynolds confirmed her belief that there are no specific plans to be shared to improve these three parks because this grant, if received, would pay to study the needs leading to eventual plans.

AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-070 passed.

G. Approve Resolution – 2025 24 Complete Streets Bike Infrastructure – Amendment 1 CF041526 – Kittelson & Associates

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Agreement to amend the contract with Kittelson & Associates to add study and evaluation of Stefko Boulevard. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-071 passed.

H. *Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 449 Linden Street*

Sponsors: Amann, Leon; Authorized to replace the existing aluminum and vinyl black fence and gate with a brick garden wall and wrought iron topper, as well as a 3-foot x 4-foot wood gate on the Linden Street side or front of the property. The Applicant also proposes to replace the existing wood lattice fence at the back northwest/Milton Street Alley corner of the property with a knee-high brick garden wall and wrought iron topper. AYE: Laird, Amann, Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-072 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk