

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, March 1, 2022 – 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

President Colón called the meeting to order. Present were Grace Crampsie Smith, Wandalyn J. Enix, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Rachel Leon, Paige Van Wirt, Kiera L. Wilhelm, and Michael G. Colón, 7.

CITATIONS

Honoring Lieutenant Samuel Kessler

President Colón read the Citation for Lieutenant Samuel Kessler on the occasion of his retirement from the Police Department after over 20 years of service and stated the Citation will be mailed to him.

Honoring Officer Fabian Martinez

President Colón read the Citation for Officer Fabian Martinez on the occasion of his retirement from the Police Department after over 22 years of service and stated the Citation will be mailed to him.

Honoring Lieutenant Inspector Robert Portalatin

President Colón read the Citation for Lieutenant Inspector Robert Portalatin on the occasion of his retirement from the Fire Department after over 30 years of service. The Members of Council applauded Lieutenant Inspector Portalatin, who was in attendance at the meeting, and wished him well in his retirement.

Firefighter Richard Sciarra

President Colón read the Citation for Firefighter Richard Sciarra on the occasion of his retirement from the Fire Department after over 25 years of service and stated the Citation will be mailed to him.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 3, 2022 Old Council Minutes and January 3, 2022 New Council Minutes

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

West Broad Street/Tall Buildings

Eddie Rodriguez, 701 Main Street, noted he is at this meeting to speak about West Broad Street and the plans to do something there to reconstruct and put a median in there. He does not see congestion there and he does not see people crossing the street. He does not understand the complaints. He would suggest not doing anything there. He also wanted to talk about the tall buildings on the south side of Bethlehem or anywhere. He thinks there should be a limit on the size of a building. He heard someone commenting about the Greenway. If you put these tall buildings up you would not have a sight of the Greenway at all. There should be a limit to the amount of buildings and the stories in a building. He is also concerned about affordable housing.

Planning Commission/South Bethlehem

Bill Scheirer, 1890 Eaton Avenue, reported he wanted to start by complimenting the Planning Office for the annual report that was presented to the Planning Commission on January 6, 2022. There was a lot of good detail. He had 2 main takeaways. The first is the collection of new apartment buildings in the works for the south side. The average height is about 7 stories; this is about twice the historic height in south Bethlehem. The second takeaway was of the 1,661 units approved in the last 10 years, 40% of those were approved in the year 2021. There seems to be a surge of interest in building high end apartments in south Bethlehem. He mentioned a paper about two economists and migration between urban areas. The Lehigh Valley falls into their classification of a medium urban area and is losing some population. Such areas on a whole are losing population to small urban areas but attracting more from the larger urban areas. This paper compared the first year of the pandemic with the last year before the pandemic and found that the net migration to medium urban areas like the Lehigh Valley had doubled. He heard last Wednesday that the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission said that the biggest deficit in housing right now was the folks making \$100,000 or more. He heard that since 2000 there has been a 30% increase in jobs in the City of Bethlehem. St. Luke's has been expanding; Lehigh University is responsible for perhaps more with its new Department of Health Sciences. But the biggest factor has probably been the warehouses. These are decent, respectable jobs but they are not particularly high paying jobs so there is the need for affordable housing. The median income in the City of Bethlehem is about \$52,000 a year. Using the 30% rule from the Housing and Urban Development that no more than 30% of your income should be spend on housing that equates to \$1,300 a month for housing. We heard that the New Street conglomerate will have 10% of its units for affordable housing. If they were to rent for \$1,300 per month it would mean that half of the city could not afford to live in the affordable apartments. The City of Bethlehem needs to decide whether it will be a city for the economic elite or whether it will continue to accommodate the hardworking, honest and caring folks who have made the city what it is, but do not happen to have a lot of money. These folks can be found in south Bethlehem, north Bethlehem, and west Bethlehem.

Affordable Housing

Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, related he wanted to continue his comments made at the meeting the other day concerning the south side about affordable single-family homes. What agency has been most responsible for affordable single-family homes on the south side? He believes that agency is the City of Bethlehem. The loss of housing on the south side is not a new issue; it began in the 1950s after World War II. Bethlehem Steel needed to expand. The GI Bill allowed veterans to attend colleges. The steel company could only move in one direction, east. The university could only move in one direction, north into the city. At that time the Redevelopment Authority of the city appointed a dean of the university and Vice President of Bethlehem Steel to head redevelopment in

the city. When the steel company and university said jump, the city said how high? That introduced the loss of Packer Avenue and Vine Street to the university to expand causing the loss of single-family homes. In the east end of the south side, the tenants, who were primarily Latino because of the low rent were destroyed. Why? The city ceased to inspect the buildings. Since they were not inspected, they were condemned. At that point the Latino community suffered a great injustice because they were blamed for not maintaining the buildings, which was not their responsibility. There also was the zoning code; all other major university towns strictly limited the number of people, of students who could live in one building, primarily to 3 and in some places only 2. But the city accommodated these non-resident landlords by defining a family as 5 unrelated. This brought in real estate developers to convert to student housing. There were many streets where this happened. That is irreversible now. The people who made the south side cannot live there anymore because there are no houses to live in. Living in an apartment building or a high rise is much different than having your own home. Mr. Antalics stated those were sad days for Bethlehem.

Ukraine

Father Richard Jendras, 77 West Broad Street, and Father Oleg Kravchenko who is a Priest in Northampton are before Council as representatives of 2 Ukrainian Churches here in the Lehigh Valley. We are Members of the Brotherhood of the Ukrainian Clergy in the Lehigh Valley. We are at this meeting to ask for your assistance and the help of all the citizens of Bethlehem and also the Lehigh Valley. As you well know a week ago a madman, Vladimir Putin, unleashed his war on the Ukrainian people. As we gather here this evening Vladimir Putin is slaughtering our people in the Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have stood up against him bravely and courageously. All we need to do is look at the television and we can see the grit and determination of the people of the Ukraine to fight against this tyranny and to fight against this injustice and to save their land and to save themselves from the tyranny. Father Jendras stated we need your help. Tomorrow Father Oleg and he and other members of our brotherhood will be meeting with other community leaders to coordinate efforts to see what we can do here in the Lehigh Valley to collect donations, run events, and bring this to the forefront. That is so we can get the support of the people living here, which we believe we already have. We need your help to publicize these events whether they are prayer rallies, prayer services, community events, or community meetings. We cannot ask you on the local government level to change laws to get armament over to the Ukrainian people or to close the skies above the Ukraine, but we can ask for your support to help us run these events and help us in communication. We would ask that in a show of support that alongside the American flag and the flag of the City of Bethlehem that you put up the yellow and blue flag of the Ukraine until this horror is over. We ask that as we coordinate efforts which such organizations as Get Downtown and the Historic Association of Bethlehem that you help us decorate Main Street or put us in touch with the people that we need to be put in touch with. We are asking for help in communication and your support. Help us do this for a freedom loving people, for a people that are looking to hold onto democracy, for a people that are basically holding the line against a tyrant from the rest of the world. Also for a people that are basically saving the world from the maniac Vladimir Putin.

President Colón thanked them for coming out this evening. If you are able stay as we work through our agenda he is sure that he and other Members of Council and the Administration would be happy to talk one on one after the meeting tonight about ways we could support your cause and your mission.

Father Jendras stated they will try but if not, they will leave their information with someone so they can be contacted.

President Colón informed that we will definitely be able to make contact with you.

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

None.

5. OLD BUSINESS

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

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. *Director of Public Works/City Engineer – Request for Public Hearing on March 15, 2022 Council Meeting – Public Comment on Pollutant Reduction Plan*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated February 18, 2022 from Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works, requesting a public hearing on the city's Pollutant Reduction Plan at the March 15, 2022 City Council Meeting. As part of the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit, the city is required to prepare and implement a Pollutant Reduction Plan (PRP). The purpose of the plan is to identify Water Quality Stormwater Best Management Practices to reduce sediment loading to impaired local surface waters.

President Colón stated the Public Hearing will be on March 15, 2022.

- B. *Director of Public Works/City Engineer – Recommendation of Award – Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc. – South Bethlehem Greenway Drainage Swale*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated February 2, 2022 from Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works, recommending a contract with Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc. for the South Bethlehem Greenway Drainage Swale project. The term of the contract is 60 days. The cost of the contract is \$21,953 and there are no renewals.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 A is on the agenda.

- C. *Director of Community and Economic Development – Recommendation of Award – Michael Baker International – Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness Consultant Services*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated February 18, 2022 from Laura Collins, Director of Community and Economic Development, recommending a contract with Michael Baker International for the Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness Consultant Services. The term of the contract is 4/1/2022 to 4/30/2023. The cost of the contract is \$84,690 with no renewals.

President Colón stated Resolution 10 B is on the agenda.

- D. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – American Association of University Women, Bethlehem Branch – 60th Annual Book Fair*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated February 24, 2022 from City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr., Esq. to which is attached a proposed Resolution and Associated Use Permit Agreement for the 60th Annual 2022 Book Fair. The Permittee is the American Association of University Women, Bethlehem Branch. The event is scheduled for April 4, 2022 – May 2, 2022 and the location is the Earl E. Schaffer Ice Rink.

President Colón stated the Resolution can be placed on the March 15 agenda.

- E. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement for Public Property – Work to Live, LLC d/b/a Run Lehigh Valley – Brew to Brew Run Event*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated February 24, 2022 from John F. Spirk, Jr., Esq, City Solicitor to which is attached a proposed Resolution and Associated Use Permit Agreement for the Brew to Brew Run Event. The Permittee is Work to Live, LLC doing business as Run Lehigh Valley. The duration of the lease is one day; April 9, 2022 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm with a rain date of April 16, 2022 and the location is Nevin Place, adjacent to the Sun Inn Courtyard and Main Street from Sand Island to Broad Street.

President Colón stated the Resolution can be placed on the March 15 agenda.

7. REPORTS

- A. *President of Council*

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

President Colón reappointed Benjamin Guthrie to membership on the Environmental Advisory Council, effective until January, 2025. Ms. Leon and Ms. Kwiatek sponsored Resolution No. 2022-032 to confirm the reappointment.

President Colón thanked the two EAC Members who are going to be reappointed this evening while he also thanks the two new members who reached out and expressed interest in the EAC. The EAC is always active. He also wanted to extend thanks to the Chair of the EAC, Lynn Rothman, who has been active for years and has been very involved in overseeing the EAC and helping gather community interest. We had a few interested individuals, and he thanks everyone who expressed interest and those who are going to be volunteering.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Wilhelm, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Dr. Enix, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, and Mr. Colón, 7. The Resolution passed.

2. *Councilmanic Appointment – R. Michael Topping – Environmental Advisory Council*

President Colón reappointed R. Michael Topping to membership on the Environmental Advisory Council, effective until January, 2025. Ms. Leon and Ms. Kwiatek sponsored Resolution No. 2022-033 to confirm the reappointment.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Wilhelm, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Dr. Enix, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, and Mr. Colón, 7. The Resolution passed.

3. *Councilmanic Appointment – Katie Trembler – Environmental Advisory Council*

President Colón appointed Katie Trembler to membership on the Environmental Advisory Council to fill the vacated seat of Brian Nicas, effective until January, 2025. Ms. Leon and Ms. Kwiatek sponsored Resolution No. 2022-034 to confirm the appointment.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Wilhelm, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Dr. Enix, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, and Mr. Colón, 7. The Resolution passed.

4. *Councilmanic Appointment – Vibhor Kumar– Environmental Advisory Council*

President Colón appointed Vibor Kumar to membership on the Environmental Advisory Council to fill the remainder of Elisabeth Cichonski's term, effective until January, 2023. Ms. Leon and Ms. Kwiatek sponsored Resolution No. 2022-035 to confirm the appointment.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Wilhelm, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Dr. Enix, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, and Mr. Colón, 7. The Resolution passed.

B. *Mayor*

Pools and Lifeguards/Police Chief Kott Congratulations

Mayor Reynolds reported last year we had a situation where all our pools were not able to be open because we did not have enough lifeguards. One of the things we started doing was earlier this year we went out into the community. Jodi Evans, Recreation Director, and Angela DelGrosso in the Mayor's Office have been working hard to get out into the community to be able to attract more lifeguards. We are ahead of where we were last year as far as recruiting lifeguards but we still do not have enough. We do not want it to be a situation where we waited until May or June to report that. We did raise the hourly wage to be competitive with some of our suburban neighbors, and it has paid off with some more people showing interest. We are ahead of where we were last year but we are not there yet, both on the lifeguards and cashiers. If anyone knows anybody please contact City Hall. We will continue to try to recruit over the next few months. If you remember last year, Clearview, Yosko, and Memorial were open and Westside and Stark were not. We have all talked about how it is a priority to open all 5 pools this year, which is still our goal. Please spread the word. We have gone out to swim meets and other places to recruit, but we are still a little bit short as of now. Mayor Reynolds congratulated Police Chief Michelle Kott who today will be participating as Congresswoman Susan Wild's virtual guest for the President's State of the Union. She had an opportunity to meet with Congresswoman Wild today which was streamed live. The Police Chief was selected because of her great work within our department, all the things we have been doing trying to implement the social work component to our public safety response. That is quite an honor for our Police Chief and for our department. This is something we should all be proud of. Congresswoman Wild represents 600,000 people and she chose our Police Chief to be her guest for the State of the Union. He wanted to publicly thank the Chief for the hard work. He noted that Business Administrator Eric Evans has a few updates.

2020 Audit

Mr. Evans remarked that we have a Finance Committee Meeting scheduled for next week but we wanted to share with the entire Council that after Covid caused a delay, we did receive a final audit for the year 2020. Typically we get our audit back in the fall, September or October, but due to the remote work that Covid has caused with the delays, we were able to put a wrap on it. Our auditors are Maher Duessel, they are Certified Public Accountants from Harrisburg, and they have been doing the audits for the city for a long time. As with any auditors, they review our reporting and report discrepancies, undercover process issues and any recording errors they may find along the way. Mr. Evans is pleased to report that the audit this year reported no findings, no issues with anything they came across through their review. The entire audit is posted on our website, as we always do; all our audits and budgets are posted on our website as soon as they are received. It will be used over the course of the next couple of years with any grant applications, any credit reviews we do and anyone else that needs access to it. That is on our home page. If any Member of Council has any questions on it, regarding the audit, please contact him or Mark Sivak, Director of Budget and Finance. We can also address any questions regarding the audit next week at our Finance Committee Meeting. In closing, he wanted to take the time to acknowledge the work of Mr. Sivak as well as Linnea Lazarchak, Financial Services Director, and her team as an audit with zero findings is very unusual. Mr. Evans related in the 14 years he has been working with the city, both on Council and now as the Business Administrator, he has never seen an audit that we are this proud of. This is something to be proud of as a city and he wanted to thank them for the work they did both with the auditors and throughout the year. Often this was done remotely which makes it more difficult to communicate, especially with some of the discussions and conversations that take place with an audit of this complexity. We have already begun work on the 2021 audit with hopes to finish it on time which will be the September timeframe for this year.

Mayor Reynolds remarked he was not in this seat last year but the Administration and many of the same people that are running those departments; it is a testament to their hard work. As Mr. Evans said, he also has seen 14 audits and he has never seen one with zero findings. Sometimes findings come back and he does not want to say they are not our fault but there are tricky situations, whether or not from an auditing point of view or an accounting point of view, to get to that point by which the auditors do not even list it as a particular finding. It is reflective and representative of the fact that the people in this building take their jobs very seriously. Mayor Reynolds noted that is not something he deserves credit for because he was not Mayor last year or when this was done. But between Mr. Alkhal and Mr. Boscola, and Mr. Evans and all of the different department heads and Controller George Yasso also, it truly is a reflection of how much goes into spending every dollar and spending in a way that can be accountable, transparent and this audit reflects that. He remembers years where there were negative findings and you would find a lot of people that come to these meetings to try to point out all of the negative things you could find in an audit. He is sure with the Finance Committee Meeting next week that Town Hall will not be packed for it but implicitly it should be packed because it is a real testament to the hard work that city employees do day in and day out. He thought that needed to be mentioned. Mayor Reynolds thanked the Priests, who came to this meeting tonight, and we will certainly speak to you and we will get your contact information in case you need to leave but we look forward working with you.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

None.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Contract – Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc. – South Bethlehem Greenway Drainage Swale*

Ms. Leon and Ms. Kwiatek sponsored Resolution No. 2022-036 that authorized to execute a contract with Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc. for the South Bethlehem Greenway Drainage Swale.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Wilhelm, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Dr. Enix, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, and Mr. Colón, 7. The Resolution passed.

B. *Approve Contract – Michael Baker International – Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness Consultant Services*

Ms. Leon and Ms. Kwiatek sponsored Resolution No. 2022-037 that authorized to execute a contract with Michael Baker International for the Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness Consultant Services.

Dr. Van Wirt asked for a bit of a background on this.

Mayor Reynolds informed this process had grown out of a several-year situation as many remember. This RFP had gone out under a previous Administration. It had grown out of the kind of year after year uncertainty with the idea of having a permanent shelter. If you go back years and years, it is a situation where different churches hosted people on different nights and it was both impractical and it was a zoning problem. The Bethlehem Emergency Shelter (BES) had gone to the Zoning Hearing Board and had been able to gather the approvals for where BES had been up the street. That process, however, with the church and the ownership of the church has been one that has been uncertain as far as the future of that church and what that would mean. That led to the previous Administration putting out an RFP to have somebody come in and study several different issues. That is the same thing that the internal group looked at when looking at these RFPs, the idea of finding a place for a stand-alone shelter, what it would cost to build one, what it would cost to operate one and the continuity of services. This is not just about building a particular shelter; it is about where are you going to put a shelter that will allow for the necessary social services that are tied to having a homeless shelter and that regional aspect of it as well. Mayor Reynolds added after that RFP went out he believes there were 5 responses that returned and then there was a committee put together of the people we have seen work on a lot of these issues with the BES for years internally. On the committee were our Emergency Management Director, Robert Novatnack, Health Director Kristen Wenrich, Director of Community and Economic Development Alicia Karner, our new Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins, and Ms. DelGrosso and Ms. Santoro from his office as well as Councilwoman Leon and Mr. Rapp and Mr. Rittle from New Bethany. The idea was that we

wanted to take a look at this. It is a regional issue, but the City of Bethlehem has a responsibility that we move past this current process, which is up in the air. We have had a lot of close calls as far as that. Last year we had to utilize the Ice House because the pandemic had helped to close down the BES. We had a few moments in January, again because of the pandemic, having to use a public facility rather than having our homeless be out on the street when it is 5 degrees outside. That is the genesis of it. We had the 5 responses and those 10 or 11 people on the committee scored the responses and then we brought in 3 of them to do virtual interviews and presentations. We went through that process and it was unanimous that from the people in that conversation they selected this service provider. It is a big decision because it is not just if we are going to do it but how we necessarily are going to spend the money. Also where is the most convenient place to put this but also the most equitable place to put it. You could put it somewhere, but that does not mean it is the best place for services for our homeless population. Mayor Reynolds noted the combination of different things that this required was the reason why we went about this process going across two Administrations. The biggest driver was just the long-term situation we dealt with for years with the uncertainty of having an emergency shelter and all of these issues that were made worse during the pandemic. That is an overview.

Ms. Crampsie Smith is glad that we are acknowledging or addressing the homelessness issue. We have said for some time now it is a major issue that we have to deal with. This is not to discount the Michael Baker International firm, but she has a lot of questions and concerns. She did not know about this until she got this in her packet this weekend. When she looked at the firm and looked at their website all she could see was that they were consultants in engineering. She could not see anything in housing. Her first question is what is their experience or expertise in consulting in homelessness and housing services specifically. She asked if we know that.

Mayor Reynolds stated we do know that. We had gone through this interview process and we had asked them a lot of different questions because the level of expertise we were looking for is always a balance. There are different people that work on these particular issues but work on one individual aspect of them. So part of it is what is the expertise that Michael Baker is able to bring in as far as expertise related to housing, which they do have, and also the engineering and other things that are not things that we necessarily have within City Hall or with the other members of the community. He added whether it is Mr. Rapp or Mr. Rittle as far as their own experiences. We are asking them to do a number of things including be flexible, because it could be a situation where three weeks from now somebody could say here is a property that is available and then if you are able to save the money on the site acquisition. We were comfortable with their presentation to the committee and there are members of that committee here tonight as well as their experience in this field.

Ms. Crampsie Smith queried if they have done any consultations specifically on housing and homelessness. That is her bottom line question: Do we know if they have done this?

Ms. Collins remarked she is happy to walk through their proposal with anybody on Council who wants to take a look at it. They have detailed a number of projects they have worked on across the country. The City of Long Beach was one we talked about in particular. When we were interviewing them they worked with the city on appropriation of property for a year round shelter there. They also worked on a vulnerable community's assessment in the City of Monterey. In Union City they worked on a public services needs assessment and then the members of their team have varied experiences in housing and urban development in the

homelessness space. The main contact is Damien Delany and he has 30 years of HUD experience in working in the housing space. We have paragraphs and paragraphs on the projects and also the individuals who are on the team. They have also sub-contracted for services from someone locally who has worked with the Ripple Inc. out in Allentown, so they are bringing local experience in as well in this specific space.

Ms. Crampsie Smith wants to address this issue as soon as possible but it is a lot of money, \$85,000, and one thing she hears from her constituents a lot is that we hire consultants a lot and they do not feel that it is worthwhile. She can see there is a need for consultants at times but she is concerned especially given her experience when she worked for the county in Human Services. She saw that it was so important that we give the money directly to the clients for the services they need. She wants to make sure that if we are going to use the money for consulting services instead of direct services to those in need that we are getting the best bang for our buck. She is not aware of this firm. She only knows from what she read over the weekend and reached out to people to try to find out what they are all about. Ms. Crampsie Smith related her other concern is if anyone from the previous housing taskforce consulted or did we look into NYU. When we did the NYU workshop for all those weeks they said those people were available for technical assistance, so did we look to their guidelines if we should use a consultant and what is the best way to tackle this or do they have any references for a consulting service.

Mayor Reynolds remarked as far as the price is concerned he believes that they were all somewhere between \$79,000 and \$100,000. One of the advantages is that Michael Baker has an office in Allentown which helps out with the regional portion of this. If you remember with the NYU workshop they focused on with affordable housing and did not necessarily involve the idea of homelessness. The strategies we went through with that cohort as far as the different ways, he has walked through that list with many on Council about affordable housing and those different strategies. Homelessness is a portion of that, but it is different from affordable housing. They are different even though they involve housing; it is not necessarily the same thing. But we use that NYU framework as far as affordable housing kind of like buckets which we talked about before on a daily basis with things like rental assistance.

Ms. Crampsie Smith does agree. It is different but the number one cause of homelessness is lack of affordable housing, so it is related. Her bottom line is that she does not know enough about the firm to vote in favor of this because it is a lot of money and it is a huge undertaking. We need to make sure that what we are doing is going to be best practices. The other issue she has with it is that it seems that this firm does a lot of different things and they do not specialize in homelessness or housing, from what she has read. When she spoke to housing experts throughout the state over the last few years and the last few days, there is one firm that sticks out that every housing expert has highly recommended and they only deal with housing. That is all they do and they are not that far away from us location wise. That is also one of her concerns. At this point she cannot support this and she would make a motion to consider moving it to the Community Development Committee and then we could even see the proposal so we could get more information on what this firm is proposing and what it entails.

Mayor Reynolds does believe that before the homelessness RFP went out it was reviewed by the NYU committee back in December. He pointed out that the members of the committee between internal, Councilwoman Leon, Mark Rittle, Bob Rapp, spent collectively hundreds of hours reviewing these proposals. Mayor Reynolds added he probably mentioned this

homelessness RFP proposal at least 10 times. We vote for consultants a lot, and back in December with one of his last votes on Council was the idea of hiring a CDBG consultant where there certainly were not some of these concerns about bringing someone in. Often times when we bring somebody in it is about having that expertise and the time we do not necessarily have in City Hall. Someone could say you could spend money to hire somebody to work on this issue, but you will not be able to get someone to work on this issue to be able to come in to handle all the different areas. You need a firm that covers all these different areas. One person would not be able to come and do site selection and other things. He also believes that Michael Baker is our CDBG consultant that we voted for in December; he is 98% sure about that. It was unanimous here and it can absolutely be a situation where people spend money on consultants and if you look at what we have and what he has put his name on in the past few years with the Northside 2027 which led to the Co-op getting the money. Also when we talk about the Climate Action Plan that many people on Council are involved in, absolutely there is a time where it does not make sense to hire somebody but we are talking about a multi-million dollar public and private investment here. Spending money on site acquisition and all these different things without having some type of expertise is just not something that any of the 11 people on the committee were comfortable with. That is the genesis behind why we were going to spend this money to be able to set the stage so we have confidence that we will find a way to solve this problem over the long term.

Ms. Crampsie Smith agrees this is a huge undertaking and that is exactly why she has concerns because we are looking at a multi-million dollar operation here. We are talking about human lives and she does not know anything about this firm besides what she saw on the internet when she researched this herself. She has a hard time voting to give \$85,000 to a firm that she does not know herself will give us the best practices in dealing with the homelessness issue in our city.

Ms. Collins stated if this will help, she will go into a little more detail about what the review process looks like. We set up internally a scoring rubric. For each consultant we are looking at qualifications and considering past experience of the firm and of the individuals and how that relates to the specific request we put in. We look at what our RFP is asking for and there is scoring associated with that. We are looking at knowledge of the scope of work so everything we asked for in the RFP we are scoring each consultant on how closely they are matching what we have asked for in their request for proposal. We are looking at whether the firms are women or minority owned businesses and we also consider the compensation. We have looked at each proposal and exactly the dollar amount that came in and compared that to the quality of the services. Every single person on the review committee scored and those scores are tallied. We then got together reviewed our scores and talked about each firm and each firm under each category and from there decided to select 3 of those firms for interviews. We brought all 3 firms in, we asked a series of questions of each firm, and we all participated in that process and then after we did those interviews we had a discussion among the 9 or 10 of us that included Councilwoman Leon and members of the community and city staff. We used that rubric in making that decision. She is happy to talk about the proposal we selected and exactly how we ended up where we ended up but she just wanted to give some comfort in some of the concerns that were raised. Ms. Collins added that she thinks rightly of course about making the right selection based on experience, price and all of that went into our multiple step review process.

Dr. Enix asked if this was discussed amongst City Council. It was mentioned there were 9 or 10 people.

Mayor Reynolds noted we had talked about this process many times as far as going out for this homelessness RFP. Then including saying we were putting together a group of people that are involved in this both internally as our external operations and we had a representative from City Council. This probably for Dr. Enix has been a whirlwind for the past few weeks. She has come in to talk to Mr. Evans, Mr. Sivak, and to the Department Heads trying to catch up on everything. He is sure information is coming very quickly. We are here every single day and we see Council a few times a week as part of committees and initiatives and that is what we are here for. He pointed out that City Hall is open 8:00 to 4:30, and he cannot tell the last time that he or Ms. Collins was not here until 6:00 or 7:00.

Dr. Enix asked if they take into account the different types of homelessness and the different reasons for homelessness. There are older folks who are homeless and families that are homeless for different reasons and also there is the mental health aspect.

Ms. Collins noted that is a topic that we talked about among ourselves and when we were looking at the different proposals we wanted to know which of these consultants does understand the various issue that come with tackling this problem. She added there is also the various dynamics, the different types of communities that need services.

Dr. Enix asked about the different criteria that is rated for each applicant.

Ms. Collins would say absolutely among the review committee that was something we were looking for.

Mayor Reynolds explained with that committee, whether it is Mr. Rapp or Mr. Rittle that works with these situations on the front lines they are going to be very, very involved as far as working with the consultant. That would be including what homelessness looks like in Bethlehem, who are the people most affected and having interviews with people who are homeless. That will be part of the process, understanding that experience from different points of view in the city.

Ms. Leon explained she was the Council person that was a part of this and she has had quite a bit of experience with unhoused populations dating back to when she was 16 years old in high school. She thinks that Michael Baker is a great company to tackle this problem with us together. But if this does get pushed to other conversations, she is still very confident that this organization will be the one that rises to the top. They do have a real depth of knowledge regarding all aspects of unhoused populations and how we can tackle that.

Ms. Kwiatek remarked that we only have had a few meetings as a Council, but we have voted on much larger contracts than this and have trusted that the experts in City Hall who deal with our water and our sewer and our recycling and all of these things are going through their due-diligence and doing the right thing. Having had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Rittle today also, she knows in this case she is comfortable with this. She just wanted to say if we were responsible for reviewing every proposal as a Council that came in through our RFP process and micro-managing City Hall nothing would ever get done. Ms. Kwiatek appreciates all the work

that went into this process with Mr. Rapp, Mr. Rittle, Councilwoman Leon and all the other people who spent many, many hours going over this material. She will be voting for this tonight.

Dr. Van Wirt thinks what you are hearing tonight is not necessarily discomfort with anything that the city has done or the need to address this problem speedily. Along that line she would like to thank Mr. Rapp and Mr. Rittle and the Administration for putting a priority in getting this done. She is speaking for many of her City Council Members although they can refute her but she thinks that we really care about this issue. It is not just a one and done issue, build a shelter and you have everything taken care of. There are a lot of different considerations. Should it be one shelter? Should it be two shelters, so you can separate single people from families? Where is the women's shelter? She thinks there is only one right now in Easton. Council is asking to have a voice in understanding what the situation is and also determining what the priorities are. She read in the RFP that was put out, flexibility is really something you want them to do. She hopes we can all be flexible. She does not think Council has intent to slow down the process but rather wants to be more informed and driven by the people in this room and what the process looks like going forward. It is not necessarily the \$85,000 for this contract that is in play here; it is what this contract and this consultant is going to be advising the city to do with the ARP money to address homelessness. It is much bigger than just \$85,000. Dr. Van Wirt does agree that a committee meeting would be beneficial to talk about this with the people who may know more than what we know because we have not been exposed to it except for this opportunity tonight for her personally to talk about these issues. That would allow us to have a much more informal gathering where we could ask the experts and talk about it amongst ourselves and move on it at that time. She does not feel for her personally there is a huge level of discomfort with the idea of contracting out knowledge, but she does think that Council would like to be involved and informed and she feels that a committee meeting would help us get to that point. She seconded the motion by Ms. Crampsie Smith.

Ms. Crampsie Smith added she appreciates Ms. Kwiatek's comments and it is true, we do vote on a lot of contracts, many of them over \$85,000. But the difference she sees is that most of those contracts are engineering with water and sewer where we have people within City Hall that is their expertise, they are engineers. She feels like with this contract, we are all very passionate about housing and homelessness that is something we have talked about for a long time. She is involved in this on a daily basis and that is why she is passionate about it. That is why she feels this is so important and we need to get more information. It is not something we are giving an engineer a contract to do the roads or something at the water or sewer plant. We are looking at something that will be extremely vital to our citizens and it will be long lasting and pervasive. That is why she feels this is a very big difference and it is important to get more information on who this firm is and what it will look like.

Ms. Wilhelm noted she is interested in learning more about the presentation, but she does value the expertise, knowledge and care on this subject that has already been put into the subject. The individuals who made this decision have a lot of experience with the subject of homelessness. She does trust this decision. If we decide tonight to vote on taking this to committee that would be a great opportunity and she can imagine that would solidify her decision.

Mayor Reynolds explained this is really being created as a public vehicle for the expertise of the people in the community. The consultant will absolutely have an opportunity to talk to any Member of City Council if they want to. Also, it allows for the different questions we have as far

as stand-alone or multiple, or where to put it. That is the number one thing in all of these hours and hours of conversations: What type of flexibility do you have to answer questions on the fly as they come up? It also was an opportunity for Mr. Rapp and Mr. Rittle who deal closer with these issues than anybody to feel comfortable going forward that they were going to be able to respond to this particular issue. We are not approving this contract to then go build something that is multi-million dollars that would not happen. It is only to put together a feasibility study and to discuss the continuity of services that are needed to respond to homelessness in the City of Bethlehem. Whatever would come back from that report could be influenced by anybody on City Council who all will have the opportunity to be part of every process. If this goes to committee, that is fine but our recommendation is still going to be Michael Baker. We would not have brought it here if the people that were associated with that committee were not sure of it. He was part of that committee with Mr. Novatnack, Ms. Wenrich, Ms. Collins, Mr. Rapp, etc. The process as these things are designed is that if it becomes the will not to hire Michael Baker, then that is Council's decision. But we went through this process and we picked Michael Baker as far as whom to recommend. If we continue to push this off it only increases the likelihood that next year we will have that sense of urgency with whatever happens and it will slow down the process. He truly believes that the only decision being made here is starting that process about taking that next step in the conversation. Mayor Reynolds added that everybody will absolutely have the opportunity to weigh in, be at the public meetings and all of that. He does not think sending it to committee in this case is going to end up with a different recommendation from the public entities that were part of this process. Any other question will be answered during this process.

Ms. Wilhelm hopes that regardless of any perspective of any individual up here that it is not translating in any way that we do not appreciate so much of the time that you put in, particularly Mr. Rapp and Mr. Rittle. We are grateful for your time and your investment; she wanted to make sure that is not getting clouded at all.

Ms. Crampsie Smith noted, as she said before, this is not a reflection on the Michael Baker International firm, because, again, she does not know much about them. They may be the best firm. She feels that it is important that we have more information because it is a big undertaking. At our last meeting we talked about doing a committee meeting anyway, so we could have public input on the whole housing issue. It might be timely that we do it and address this and have the public here to give their input. She also thinks the contract is not until April 1st. So even though it is timely, we do have a month to get a committee meeting going and have a resolution by then.

President Colón commented that he will be supporting this resolution as it appears on the agenda. He agrees with a lot of the things that were brought up already from both perspectives of those in support of voting on it and those in support of taking a harder look at this. At the end of the night he falls on the side of being prepared to vote on this tonight. He appreciates the insight to the process, he appreciates a Member of Council being involved in the process and the insight she shared with us. He thanks the members of the community for all the work you do outside of City Hall, but then you take your own time to be involved with this. We heard tonight about other contracts we award as a Council when they come before us sometimes for hundreds of thousands of dollars, not only \$85,000. More often than not those go through, but at the same time there is the understanding those are usually construction projects and we are not kicking off the future potential to serve the underserved members of our community and city. As we talk about where we are at this point here he looks back on other contracts that were awarded, it is not

a one to one comparison. But the Pedestrian Bridge study, where he thought in order to get to that end point of exploring where we hope to be we needed that kicking off point. President Colón looks at this contract as the kicking off point. When we talk about input from our community or our community leaders or stakeholders or Members of Council, given the background and explanation from the Administration, there will be adequate time and input during this process for that. He added that the community will not be shut out of these conversations moving forward with the recommended party here in front of us. As it relates to this contract he looks at this as a jumping off point to further more extensive conversations over the course of this year and once recommendations come forward we can see where we are with things. President Colón noted that \$84,000 is not a little bit of money. There was a time not too long ago where you could buy a row home in Bethlehem for \$84,000. Those days have passed. Also as we talk about using the American Rescue Funds, this is a drop in the bucket for the purpose of what those funds are to be allocated for when we look at the total resources for that. He understands the work that was put into it not just by the Administration but other members of the community, a Member of Council, an extensive review of those that responded to the RFP. While a committee meeting would give opportunity to discuss the award or who was recommended, he is comfortable voting on this tonight and moving forward. He is in support of this tonight, instead of sending this to committee. He will open it up to any motions that want to be made by Council as it relates to this.

Dr. Van Wirt stated she thought a motion was made and seconded already.

President Colón asked to state the motion again just for the record so we can vote on that.

Ms. Crampsie Smith made the motion to move this contract to the Community Development Committee and Dr. Van Wirt seconded the motion.

President Colón wanted to be clear if this is a motion to table this resolution tonight or a motion to postpone the vote tonight. He believes a motion to postpone it would require setting an actual date where it would be on a further agenda.

Solicitor Panella stated that is correct and that is his recommendation. As Councilwoman Crampsie Smith had pointed out, this is a set contract time and we do have a month to do this. So, in this case, he thinks it would be appropriate to set a Council Meeting specifically for this. A postponement would require a set date for this.

President Colón noted that Solicitor Panella recommends a motion to postpone and in that motion setting a date for this to reappear on a full Council agenda.

Solicitor Panella stated that is correct. His fear as legal counsel for Council is that items like this, if there is no end date place, can get lost. Given what he has heard with the intentions to maybe review this more, it may be more appropriate for this to appear on a certain date so Council can take action.

Ms. Crampsie Smith made the motion to postpone this resolution until the April 5, 2022 Council Meeting. She wondered if we would be able to get the Community Development Committee Meeting done in March.

Solicitor Panella noted if it is postponed until April 5, 2022, regardless if the committee meeting happens or not it will still reappear on the agenda at that time. What Council decides to do with it at that time would be up to Council. His recommendation is to have some certain date to put a fire under this to have a committee meeting so that way this can get discussed and handled appropriately.

Ms. Crampsie Smith made the motion to postpone this resolution until the April 19, 2022 Council meeting so we can discuss this at the Community Development Committee Meeting.

President Colón noted there is a motion by Councilwoman Crampsie Smith to postpone this resolution until April 19, 2022. Dr. Van Wirt seconded the motion.

Ms. Wilhelm wanted to clarify, an AYE vote means we will table it to April 19, 2022 and a NAY vote means we will then vote on it tonight.

President Colón informed if the motion fails, then the Clerk will call the roll and we will vote on the resolution this evening as it stands.

Mayor Reynolds remarked that April 1, 2022 contract is based on the idea that Council passes it and it goes through all the things it needs to go through in City Hall including Legal, etc. for the work to start at that point. It has to go to Legal, the Business Administrator, to all those different places. If this is not voted on until April 19, 2022 or whenever, it is a solid month after that, before the contract and the services can begin. That is what the April 1, 2022 deadline is based on. So it is not even if you pass it at the April 5, 2022 meeting. It is not like you could start on April 1, 2022. This is a step in the contracting process and then it has to go all the way through City Hall, to the Controller's Office and others before it gets signed, executed, and then it can begin. Mayor Reynolds has the proposed schedule from Ms. Collins so if it were passed today the first task is stakeholder engagement which is a 6 to 8 week process in April and May of 2022.

Ms. Leon asked if we postpone until April 19, 2022, if they happen to get the committee meeting done earlier, maybe next week, can you then move it up or does it have to stay on April 19, 2022?

President Colón mentioned there would have to be a process to that.

Solicitor Panella informed let's say the committee meeting happens tomorrow and it could be placed on the immediate next agenda. It would have to be appropriately advertised and handled that way. Would it be fair to say that Councilwoman Crampsie Smith's motion would be interpreted as April 19, 2022? Would that be the latest date?

Ms. Crampsie Smith stated yes, absolutely.

Solicitor Panella stated in that case, yes, it would be something that could be placed on an agenda assuming the meeting happens earlier and be advertised appropriately which would be the ideal situation when we are dealing with a time sensitive issue like this.

Ms. Crampsie Smith remarked if we can meet sometime in March then we can put it on the April 5, 2022 agenda.

Solicitor Panella stated yes, as long as there is enough time to satisfy all the advertising requirements.

Dr. Van Wirt informed if we could conceivably meet as a committee next Tuesday then it could be put on the next Council agenda as long as we have a majority.

President Colón would advise having that conversation with our City Clerk concerning everyone's availability, the Administration's availability, and if we are going to invite the company that will receive the award. Also there is a Finance Committee Meeting that same evening when we talk about next Tuesday.

Mayor Reynolds remarked there are a lot of people on the administrative side to involve in any potential meeting, inside and outside of City Hall.

Dr. Van Wirt would assume they would be motivated to make it to the meeting if time is of the essence. That is why she is saying conceivably we could schedule a meeting for next Tuesday and it would be on the next Council agenda.

President Colón thinks anything we were scheduling at this very moment would be in pencil and not in pen out of fairness to all the different people who would be involved. It would be pertinent to engage our City Clerk to reach out to everyone as soon as possible. Right here on the spot without having everyone even present in this room would be premature.

Dr. Van Wirt is not asking to schedule it; she is saying conceivably the potential exists to get it on the next Council Meeting agenda.

President Colón mentioned the potential exists pending on availability.

Voting AYE on the motion: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Dr. Enix, 3. Voting NAY: Ms. Wilhelm, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, Mr. Colón, 4. The Motion failed.

President Colón stated we will continue on with the agenda as it was previously advertised and if there are no other comments or questions from Members of Council he will ask the Clerk to call the roll on the approval of the contract with Michael Baker International.

Dr. Van Wirt mentioned the idea of having this committee meeting is, for her, not about necessarily scrutinizing the contract, it is about having Council engaged in the discussion of homelessness and how it is approached and how the priorities are set and who is setting the priorities. That is what it is about. She is more than happy to have a contract go out but this was a way for us to ask you, or for her to ask you, can we please be engaged on a level and how this rolls out? What are the priorities? We represent the citizens and it is important for Council to have a role in the future of solving this problem together not to supplant the expertise in the room but to understand it and to be able to vote meaningfully for funding these things. That is what this was about for her.

Mayor Reynolds stated to Dr. Van Wirt that we are always willing to have a committee meeting, whether or not a committee meeting to talk about this or to talk about the process. He knows that Dr. Van Wirt is dealing with things that are much more important on a day-to-day

basis than a lot of what goes on around here. But any time that is convenient for you personally but also City Council. We are always willing to show up at any point for a committee meeting and go through all of this, even outside of the stakeholder engagement process. We are just trying to get that process going to allow for that particular engagement.

Ms. Crampsie Smith agrees. We all care about our folks who are homeless and those who cannot afford housing in this community. The best way is to work together. She does not use the word expertise lightly, but she has been fortunate to meet people who she does feel are experts throughout the state in her last 3 years looking at housing and homelessness. There are a lot of people even in the Lehigh Valley who have the knowledge with this issue, and she would like us to engage them.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Ms. Wilhelm, Dr. Enix, Ms. Kwiatek, Ms. Leon, and Mr. Colón,
6. Voting NAY: Ms. Crampsie Smith, 1. The Resolution passed.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Finance Committee Meeting

Chairwoman Enix announced a Finance Committee Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 6:00 PM in Town Hall. The committee will discuss three agenda items. The first one is a proposed Bethlehem Authority Debt transaction; the second is the annual year-end budget adjustments and the third is the health grant adjustments.

Congratulations Chief Kott/Moment of Silence for the Ukraine People

Ms. Crampsie Smith stated huge kudos to Police Chief Michelle Kott on her recognition tonight. It is well deserved. She and everyone in the city are grateful and proud to have you as our Police Chief. Before we adjourn she was hoping we could have a moment of silence for our friends over in the Ukraine who are fighting the good fight right now.

Climate Action Plan

Ms. Kwiatek reported that she is happily engaged with some other Council Members in the Climate Action Plan implementation process. We had numerous sub-committee meetings and she is happy to be working with some fellow Council Members and also Members of the Administration to actually make these things that are on paper a reality. Speaking as someone who has Ukrainian roots, she is a partially Ukrainian Jew, her maternal grandmother's grandparents fled the Pogroms of the 1870s and she wishes the people of the Ukraine well and is thinking of them.

Moment of Silence

President Colón asked for a moment of silence as we reflect on what is going on in the Ukraine.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm.

ATTEST:

Judy R. Kelechava
Assistant City Clerk