

Resolution urging the City Administration to protect South Bethlehem’s access to high-quality and affordable food in connection with the anticipated closure of Ahart’s Market

WHEREAS, Ahart’s Market, located at 410 Montclair Avenue, is one of only two major grocery stores on the South Side of Bethlehem and is scheduled to close at the end of April due to decreased sales caused by the Covid pandemic. This grocery store has been a vital source of high-quality affordable food in South Bethlehem for approximately twenty years.

WHEREAS, a “food desert” is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) based on various census tract statistics related to income, transportation, and other community indicators. According to the USDA, food deserts often feature large proportions of households with low incomes, inadequate access to transportation, and a limited number of food retailers providing fresh produce and healthy groceries for affordable prices.

WHEREAS, South Bethlehem is considered a food desert by the USDA, and residents of South Bethlehem, including renters, homeowners, and college students are all negatively impacted by of the lack of easily accessible high-quality food options.

WHEREAS, an assortment of negative community and individual outcomes are associated with living in a food desert including higher incidence of obesity and increased prevalence of diabetes and other weight-related diseases. Moreover, children need access to nutritious food to obtain essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients necessary for healthy growth and development.

WHEREAS, the City previously recognized the importance of protecting residents’ access to healthy and affordable food options when the City previously offered low-interest loans and other financial incentives to encourage the opening of a high-quality grocery store in South Bethlehem.

WHEREAS, Bethlehem City Council is extremely concerned that the loss of one of the only two high-quality grocery stores in South Bethlehem will seriously harm the health and well-being of individuals and families on the South Side. The loss of such a significant source of high-quality and affordable food will especially hurt the City’s most vulnerable and marginalized communities, whom have been disproportionately devastated by the health and financial effects of the pandemic and are already suffering from significant food insecurity.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Bethlehem urges the Mayor and the City Administration to investigate all feasible options for incentivizing the continued operation of a high-quality grocery store at the Ahart’s Market site in order to promote equity and protect the health and well-being of individuals and families in South Bethlehem.

Sponsored by _____

ADOPTED by Council this _____ day of March, 2021.

President of Council

ATTEST:

City Clerk