

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
10 East Church Street - Town Hall  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, December 21, 2021 – 7:00 PM

INVOCATION

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

Vice President Colón called the meeting to order. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Olga Negrón, J. William Reynolds, Paige Van Wirt and Adam R. Waldron, 6. Grace Crampsie Smith was absent, 1.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 16, 2021

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

*Environmental Advisory Council Year-End Report*

Lynn Rothman, 870 Wafford Lane, informed she is speaking on behalf of her fellow Environmental Advisory Council Members, Elizabeth Behrend, Elisabeth Cichonski, Ben Felzer, Ben Guthrie, Brian Nicas, and Mike Topping. Dear Mayor Donchez and Honorable Members of City Council in accordance with the Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council Bylaws, we submit the following report for the year 2021. Our most important work this year has been supporting the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP), which aims to reduce our carbon footprint, increase sustainability and utilize alternative energy sources. In order to realize the goals of the CAP, we revised our 2019 proposal for a ban on single use plastics bags and submitted a draft ordinance for Council's consideration. In addition, we are currently working with the Department of Planning and Zoning and the Fire Chief to update the City's solar ordinances. The Department of Planning and Zoning has been giving us the opportunity to comment and make recommendations for proposed developments. Our recommendations are based on furthering the goals of the CAP. All of our correspondence can be found on our website ([www.bethlehemeac.org](http://www.bethlehemeac.org))

EAC Activities

- EAC member served as panelist at Bethlehem Area Public Library's forum *Modeling a Solution of Cooperation between Conservation and Development* (April)
- Hosted virtual forum with Allentown & Easton EACs and the Alliance for Sustainable Communities emphasizing volunteer opportunities in the Lehigh Valley with panelists from multiple organizations (Earth Day)
- EAC member participated in the Community Engagement Panel for the May 2021 PA EAC Network Conference
- Tabled at the Inaugural Rose Fest at the Rose Garden (June)
- Tabled at the Environmental Defense Fund Conference at Steel Stacks celebrating

important climate work being done across the Lehigh Valley (August)

- Tabled at the Climate Strike Rally on Payrow Plaza (September)
- Membership on the Pedestrian Bridge Working Group and focus groups
- Held two successful clean-ups of the Monocacy Creek in partnership with the Monocacy Creek Watershed Association
- Bethlehem, Allentown and Easton EACs coordinated the second Lehigh Valley EAC Network Meeting (September)
- EAC members mentored two Lehigh University Students in Environmental Justice Internships
- Member of External Advisory Group for Lehigh University's Climate Action Strategy
- Continued maintenance of our website and Facebook page with increasing numbers of followers
- Continued to welcome members of the public to raise issues and voice their concerns at our meetings.

#### Speakers at EAC Monthly Meetings

- Tracy Samuelson, Assistant Director of Planning & Zoning
- Lehigh University Students Ben Murphy-Schmehl and CJ Marina: Environmental Justice and the Climate Action Plan
- Elisabeth Cichonski: Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and community scale solar
- Isaac Weber, intern with LV Alliance for Sustainable Communities: Sections of Bethlehem's zoning code that could be amended to support the strategies in the CAP
- Lehigh University Students Alyssa Klinger, Katie Goettle, Morgan Murray: Designing a biodigester for dog waste. Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife is an active standing committee of the EAC with a dedicated group of volunteers. Please see pages 3 & 4 of this report for an overview of their mission and activities in 2021.
- All candidates for Bethlehem City Council and two of the three Mayoral Candidates took the opportunity to introduce themselves and speak about environmental issues at the April EAC meeting

In 2021, with the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions lifted by the City, we were able to work on maintaining the Hoover-Mason Trestle on a regular basis, which was a huge improvement over 2020. Our routine debris removal, weeding and pruning during the spring and summer months were aided greatly by the City work crew, who met us after each cleanup event and loaded up the piles of debris, hauling it to the Recycling Center. Ongoing COVID restrictions from other volunteer groups who have assisted us in the past, prior to COVID, meant we had lots of maintenance to do with a limited number of volunteers. The group also expanded and maintained 2 native perennial gardens on Eighth Avenue and assisted with planting areas of the Rose Barden. We are hopeful that in 2022 we will return to a full complement of volunteers to maintain the Hoover Mason Trestle and the other native garden areas, all of which are such a valuable asset to the City of Bethlehem.

In January 2022 EAC members Brian Nicas and Elisabeth Cichonski will no longer serve as council members. Both Brian and Elisabeth have been invaluable members, bringing forth and working on new initiatives, as well as overseeing our website and fb page. While they will be missed as council members, we look forward to their continuing involvement with the EAC. As a result we are looking for 2 new members. Interested city residents may send a letter of interests and a resume to City Council. Our website and Facebook page has the detailed instructions. Our great appreciation goes to Robert Vidoni, City Clerk, and Judy Kelechava, Assistant City Clerk, for their assistance. They respond immediately to all of our requests and questions, place meeting

notices in the newspaper and facilitate communication between the EAC and City Council. Additional appreciation to Wm. Alexander Karras, Chief of Staff, for facilitating communication with the Mayor's office. We recognize and appreciate our City Council liaison, J. William Reynolds, for his assistance, and continued efforts on behalf of climate action. We also acknowledge and thank Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works, Matt Dorner, Deputy Director of Public Works, Darlene Heller, Director Planning & Zoning, Tracy Samuelson, Assistant Director of Planning & Zoning, and Steven Fernstrom, Executive Director of the Bethlehem Parking Authority, for their ongoing contributions to climate action. We commend City Council and the Administration for their support of the CAP and initiatives to make Bethlehem a greener, more pedestrian and bike friendly city. In 2022 we will continue to assist in implementing the goals of the CAP.

Vice President Colón thanked Ms. Rothman for the report and for her stewardship and long hours that she puts in as the volunteer Chair for the EAC.

#### *City Taxes*

Richard Ellis, 2002 Easton Avenue, explained his issue is with taxes. He is a senior citizen and he lives on a fixed income. He voiced his opinion virtually last spring and he asked for any comments and only Mr. Callahan responded. He is one of the 30% of the people who do come out and vote. He read recently that Easton in the last 10 years had no tax increases while Bethlehem in 2013 had a large tax increase. In 2015 we had a tax increase, in 2016 we had a tax increase, in 2018 we had a tax increase, in 2019 we had a tax increase, and in 2021 we had a tax increase. He has been retired since 2015 and his base income went up zero percent in 2015, .3 % in 2016, 2% in 2017, 2.8% in 2018, 1.6% in 2019 and 1.3% in 2020. It is hard to keep up and it has almost taken half of our increases just to pay for our taxes in the City of Bethlehem. Mr. Ellis remarked we were supposed to get some money back from the Casino, but we got nothing. Once the Hirko suit was settled, we did not get any of that money back. What bothered him was the water/sewer runoff that was enacted this year. Our new Mayor-elect wants to hire two positions at \$150,000 a year. Try to walk in our shoes and make our ends meet with our taxes, our healthcare and upkeep on our homes. It is harder and harder and harder. He would appreciate someone to comment this time about this.

#### *Dr. Martin Luther King March*

Frankie West, 712 New Street, commented that since 1989 we started a little organization, the NAACP and after 1989 it was just 3 of us who just started the Martin Luther King march but now he made a phone call to see if we would be allowed to have the place at that time and he got a comment that he is not the Mayor and there will be a new Mayor and he will take care of this. Mr. West noted he has been doing this for 50 years walking on his feet from here to here to make the community for these kids to understand what Dr. Martin Luther King is. For you to have the audacity and not give him a call back and say to your secretary to have the other Mayor take care of it. He is trying to talk about what is right and what is wrong. We were originally there and they have to march after us, not before us.

#### *Historic Commissions*

Steve Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, 1201 Butztown Road, remarked that value is not an absolute function and value can only be determined in a comparative manner. So let us use that process to evaluate the city's historic conservation groups. The property at 223 East Church Street applied for permission to replace a banister on a porch. This went before the Historic Conservation Commission group and it was denied simply because the material was to be a composite and not wood, according to the guidelines. Of course, a composite could be painted and no one would know the difference. This tells him that the policing is done with microscopic and tenth decimal place accuracy. Just a banister on a porch with resulting lengthy discussion of a member of the group here at City Council and Council joining them in conversation about the denial. So let's compare that to the property at 4<sup>th</sup> and Vine Street. The developer wishes to put up a 9 story building and the Historic Conservation Commission approved it with the exclamation that if Hotel Bethlehem can be 9 stories so can that building be 9 stories. That is an absurd conclusion but also it violates the city's own ordinance 1714. Mr. Antalics remarked on these two issues let us compare both historic district commissions. How would you rate them? The first on Church Street would get an A plus, the second a D minus, minus or absurd. Where is the equity in the system in the city for historic valuation of the entire city? It does not exist, simply because of the stigma of the south side going way, way back in the early days of the borough times; the south side was considered the home of Europeans living in a shanty town. That has carried on throughout the ages reflected in historic conservation. It does not matter on the south side to consider history. Another absurdity is connecting the Mount Airy District with the south side in the same organization, they do not fit. The Mount Airy District is almost a neighbor by a block or so from the Historical and Architectural Review Board district, so why is it not there and why are people on opposite sides of the river deciding what is good for the south side, they do not live there. Mr. Antalics believes there is a serious problem here and Council has played into it by approving these variations without intense discussion similar to the one on East Market. Let's get rid of the south side and bypass the Lehigh River with the new funds coming from the federal government, they we will not have a south side to denigrate.

*Martin Luther King March*

Reverend Tim D. Smith, 651 Ridge Street, informed he wanted to briefly address the issue with the Martin Luther King march. As Mr. West stated the march was established pretty much in 1989 and in that first year it was a collective event between the NAACP and other civic and fraternal organizations. Since then it has been a stand-alone kind of leadership role in regards to the march. Our concern is that the scheduling for that event for this year somehow has been linked together with the NAACP at the same time. We are concerned because we basically want to preserve the integrity of the tradition of the Martin Luther King march since 1989. With that scheduling change or the lack thereof in understanding the permit process and all, he is concerned that we negated those who have been doing the work for a long time. It is my concern that both the religious, civic, and fraternal organizations that have been null and void for the last few years, he is suggesting that we allow the permit process to happen for this year's event and done in a way that all these parties will come together. He added that maybe for this year and this year alone that we continue the permit process with the original parties and then next year all these parties come together to work collectively. That would help with some of the confusion. It has been a contention among the NAACP, fraternal organizations, and religious organizations and we have to resolve those ourselves but he does not want to see that next year's event would be squashed because people cannot get along. Reverend Smith is concerned that we make sure that first we fix the scheduling problem so that those who are holding the parade will be able to

do that in the time allotted and have the NAACP or whatever organization that is permitted to be able to do that following. Thereafter then schedule this event in the spirit of Martin Luther King and in unity and do it together.

Vice President Colón mentioned if anyone wants to talk to any Member of Council regarding Dr. King Day, they can after the meeting tonight, please stick around after we get through the agenda.

*Historic Conservation/Taxes*

Bill Scheirer, 1890 Eaton Avenue, remarked that it is symbolic that Gadfly number two should follow Gadfly number one and in substance as well about the south side development. He has not heard this from any member of the Historic Conservation Commission but it seems to him that the members of that commission aside from some rather casual comments during the meeting have given up on the subject of height and mass. That is because there have been a number of votes recently here at Council where that group has been overruled and when they are overruled everything they said about that project was null and void. What they seem to be doing is they are disregarding height and mass except for occasional comments maybe saying they can take out the middle two stories or something like that. They are concentrating on the details, the materials and design in the realization that if they do not object to the height and mass then their recommendation will be approved by City Council and at least they will be having some impact on the looks of the building if not the size and mass. On the subject of taxes, the Bureau of Labor Statistics will back up the gentleman who spoke before. They have looked at since 1976 the cost of living for the elderly and it goes up faster than the cost of living for all urban wage earners which is the index used to increase social security and other pensions for the elderly. The increases are not enough to keep up with the increase in the cost of living for the people receiving them, primarily because of healthcare. He made some remarks before about the storm water fee, in that it is doubly regressive and that richer folks pay a lower percentage of their income for that fee than poor folks even though richer folks are responsible for more storm water runoff because they have bigger properties. Mr. Scheirer will stand by those remarks but he has learned one important thing about the storm water fee. It is that it is a mechanism for getting money out of certain non-profits. He has learned that Lehigh pays \$100,000 dollars a year in a storm water fee where they are exempt from taxes. That is an argument for keeping the storm water fee the way it is and not an argument for the recycling fee if Lehigh takes care of its own recycling. But what can we do about this double regressive fee? It is not fair. One possibility is why not make the real estate tax progressive where richer folks with bigger properties pay a higher percentage of their income in that real estate tax like the federal income tax. Maybe there is a state law prohibiting it, he will look into it and if there is that is a law that should be changed. He wanted to plant that thought for next year's budget.

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

*Water Fund Budget*

Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge, 1201 Butztown Road remarked he would like to bring your attention to Bill 34-2021, the Water Fund Budget. He noted during the discussion to arrive at some conclusion for that budget, he wondered if there was any discussion as to how possibly loss

revenues might be recovered to reduce the burden on citizens in terms of a water rate. This is the third time he has brought this up with no comment from the Administration or Council about the \$9 million dollars lost with water not being accounted for. The question is, was that discussed during the Water Budget hearings, and was it ever discussed? Also is this of interest for Council to find out what is going on because you do sign off on their bills for work done. Mr. Antalics related that \$9 million dollars is a nice piece of change. The citizens of Bethlehem really need to know what is going on here. The press has not covered it, so how can we let the people know about possible negligence.

5. OLD BUSINESS

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

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. *Director of Water and Sewer Resources – Recommendation of Award – Ankiewicz Enterprises, Inc. – Pierce Street Sewer Replacement Project*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated December 13, 2021 from Edward Boscola, Director of Water and Sewer Resources recommending a change order to an existing construction contract with Ankiewicz Enterprises, Inc. for work related to the Pierce Street Sewer Replacement Project. The change order increased cost is \$46,868.00 and the new total cost for the contract is \$273,940.00.

Vice President Colón stated Resolution 10 A is on the agenda.

- B. *Director of Community and Economic Development – Recommendation of Award – ArtsQuest – Gateway Sculpture Project*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated December 15, 2021 from Alicia Karner, Director of Community and Economic Development recommending a contract with ArtsQuest for services related to the Gateway Sculpture Project. The completion date is June 30, 2022 and the cost is \$62,500. There are no renewals.

Vice President Colón stated Resolution 10 B is on the agenda.

- C. *Housing and Community Development Planner – Recommendation of Award – Michael Baker International – Community Development Consultant Services*

The Clerk read a memorandum dated December 14, 2021 from Christina Roseberry, Housing and Community Development Administrator recommending a contract with Michael Baker International for Community Development Professional Services. The term runs 1/1/2022 through 12/30/2023. The cost is \$76,480 and there are no renewals.

Vice President Colón stated Resolution 10 C is on the agenda.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

B. *Mayor*

*Last City Council Meeting as Mayor of Bethlehem*

Mayor Donchez remarked tonight is his last City Council Meeting as a Member of this body. He has had the privilege and honor of service 18 years on City Council, 8 as President of Council and now 8 as Mayor. He wanted to thank his Department Heads for the outstanding work they have done for the past 8 years. He thanked all the Members of City Council present and the past members he has served with for their cooperation during his past 8 years and also his 18 years serving on that side of the table. He wishes the new Mayor and his team the best of luck and the new Members of City Council. Mayor Donchez stressed it has been a privilege and honor to serve the citizens of Bethlehem for the past 26 years.

Vice President Colón thanked Mayor Donchez for his comments and added that we will all have some comments when we get to New Business tonight.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

A. *Bill No. 33-2021 – Adopting the 2022 General Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 33-2021 – Adopting the 2022 General Fund Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 5.  
Voting NAY: Mr. Callahan, 1. Bill No. 33-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-31 was passed on Final Reading.

B. *Bill No. 34-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Water Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 34-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Water Fund Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE WATER FUND BUDGET FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 34-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-32 was passed on Final Reading.

C. *Bill No. 35-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Sewer Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 35-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Sewer Fund Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE SEWER FUND BUDGET FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 35-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-33 was passed on Final Reading.

D. *Bill No. 36-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Golf Course Enterprise Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 36-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Golf Course Enterprise Fund Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds 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 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 36-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-34 was passed on Final Reading.

E. *Bill No. 37-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Liquid Fuels Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 37-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Liquid Fuels Fund Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE LIQUID FUELS FUND BUDGET FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 37-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-35 was passed on Final Reading.

F. *Bill No. 38-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Capital Budget for Non-Utilities*

The Clerk read Bill No. 38-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Capital Budget for Non-Utilities, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES FOR 2022



Voting AYE: Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 5.  
Voting NAY: Dr. Van Wirt, 1. Bill No. 38-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-36 was passed on Final Reading.

G. *Bill No. 39-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Capital Budget for Water Utilities*

The Clerk read Bill No. 39-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Capital Budget for Water Utilities, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE CAPITAL BUDGET FOR WATER UTILITIES FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 39-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-37 was passed on Final Reading.

H. *Bill No. 40-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Capital Budget for Sewer Utilities*

The Clerk read Bill No. 40-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Capital Budget for Sewer Utilities, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE CAPITAL BUDGET FOR SEWER UTILITIES FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 40-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-38 was passed on Final Reading.

I. *Bill No. 41-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Community Development Block Grant Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 41-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Community Development Block Grant Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds 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 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 41-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-39 was passed on Final Reading.

J. *Bill No. 42-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Storm Water Fund Budget*

The Clerk read Bill No. 42-2021 – Adopting the 2022 Storm Water Fund Budget, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING  
THE STORM WATER FUND BUDGET FOR 2022

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. Bill No. 42-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-40 was passed on Final Reading.

K. *Bill No. 43-2021 – Fixing the 2022 Tax Rate for All City Purposes*

The Clerk read Bill No. 43-2021 – Fixing the 2022 Tax Rate for All City Purposes, sponsored by Mr. Colón and Mr. Reynolds 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

Vice President Colón noted that appreciates the gentleman that spoke tonight. Every year he goes over what our millage rate is, what our tax rate is compared to our neighboring municipalities. Of course it is not apples to apples comparison because each municipality has its own unique sets of circumstances and different ways of taxing to bring in revenue. But before we fix the tax rate he would like to point out that our city tax rate which is different in Northampton County and Lehigh County based on the different assessments, we are fortunate that our tax rate in the City of Bethlehem is 20% lower than Easton in Northampton County and Allentown in Lehigh County. That does invite business and invites people whether they are first time homeowners or people looking to retire to Bethlehem. While he agrees with comments made about the burden of increasing taxes and he has been part of raising taxes in his time on Council over the years. Fortunately tonight we are not in a position where we are raising taxes but he always likes to bring up that the Administration's current, previous and future always do their best to hold the line as best as possible. We are fortunate to realize a tax rate that is 20% lower than our neighboring municipalities for comparison here in the Lehigh Valley.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 5. Voting NAY: Mr. Callahan, 1. Bill No. 43-2021 now known as Ordinance No. 2021-41 was passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Contract – Ankiewicz Enterprises, Inc. – Pierce Street Sewer Replacement Project*

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds sponsored Resolution No. 2021-226 that authorized to execute a contract with Ankiewicz Enterprises, Inc. for work related to the Pierce Street Sewer Replacement Project.

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

*B. Approve Contract – ArtsQuest – Gateway Sculpture Project*

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds sponsored Resolution No. 2021-227 that authorized to execute a contract with ArtsQuest for services related to the Gateway Sculpture Project.

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

*C. Approve Contract – Michael Baker International – Community Development Consultant Services*

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds sponsored Resolution No. 2021-228 that authorized to execute a contract with Michael Baker International for Community Development Consultant Services.

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

*Motion – Considering Resolutions 10 D through 10 F as a group – Certificates of Appropriateness*

Ms. Negrón and Dr. Van Wirt moved to consider Resolutions 10 D through 10 F as a group.

Voting AYE: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. The Motion passed.

*D. Certificate of Appropriateness – 56 West Market Street*

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds sponsored Resolution No. 2021-229 that granted a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace a five inch tall address/street number with a seven inch tall address/street number at 56 West Market Street.

*E. Certificate of Appropriateness – 443 Linden Street*

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds sponsored Resolution No. 2021-230 that granted a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the existing asphalt shingles and underlayment on the main portion of the home at 443 Linden Street.

*F. Certificate of Appropriateness – 89 West Church Street*

Ms. Negrón and Mr. Reynolds sponsored Resolution No. 2021-231 that granted a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace all windows on the Historic Brethren's House at 89 West Church Street.

Voting AYE on Resolutions 10 D through 10 F: Dr. Van Wirt, Mr. Callahan, Mr. Colón, Ms. Negrón, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Waldron, 6. The Resolutions passed.

11. NEW BUSINESS

*Next Council Meeting-Monday, January 3, 2022*

Vice President Colón mentioned about rescheduling the first Council Meeting in January to Monday, January 3, 2022 at 7:00 PM. The next Council Meeting will be on that date. There will be no meeting on Tuesday, January 4, 2022. On that night of Monday, January 3, 2022 we will have two meetings. The first will be the final meeting of the current Council and the second meeting that same night will be the Swearing In of the new Council Members and the election of new Council officers. The second January Council Meeting will be on Tuesday, January 18, 2022 which will be returning to our regular third Tuesday of the month schedule. Again, the next Council Meeting will be Monday, January 3, 2022 at 7:00 PM.

*Martin Luther King March/Last Council Meeting/Mayor Donchez*

Mr. Reynolds noted to Mr. West as he said to him before the meeting that we will find a way to work this out. Mr. Reynolds pointed out he has marched with Mr. West almost every year at the Martin Luther King march and he appreciates Mr. West coming out tonight and the willingness to work together on a solution. We will have a conversation and find a way to work this out. Mr. Reynolds pointed out this is his last meeting on City Council, it has been 14 years and he figured out that was 336 monthly meetings of City Council for 2 meetings a month for 14 years. One thing that everyone would agree is that we have seen a lot of progress in the past 14 years. Sometimes there are disagreements and not everybody sees eye to eye but that is the way Democracy works. He thanks all of his colleagues who he has enjoyed great relationships with. He is looking forward to continuing those relationships with those remaining members. To the ones that are leaving, he wanted to thank them as well for the friendship and hard work in everything you have brought to the city. He also thanked Mayor Donchez for his service. Mr. Reynolds remarked when he first decided to run for City Council about 16 years ago one of the first people he had a conversations with was Bob Donchez. From those first days sitting down and learning about the city, the history, and about how City Hall works and being a member of City Council, he could not be more gracious to me. He spent 6 years with Mayor Donchez on City Council and obviously has worked well with him over the past 8 years. One of those twists of fate, his class at Allen High School was only a few feet from the room that he taught in for 34 years. We have many connections. Mr. Reynolds wanted to congratulate Mayor Donchez on a great career. Many times when people think about what makes Bethlehem different, we all read the articles about other cities with disagreements with Council Members and School Boards, but by and large Bethlehem always finds a way to agree to disagree. A lot of that spirit and tone has reflected in the public service of Mayor Donchez over the past 26 years. We have had some conversations about different committees, and Mayor Donchez has done a lot of work on the World Heritage designation and we have had some conversations about him continuing to assist that in the free time he may have now other than spending it with his children and grandchildren. We look forward to those days as well. Mr. Reynolds congratulated Mayor Donchez on a great career.

*Mayor Donchez/Council Members*

Dr. Van Wirt echoes what Mr. Reynolds has said. Since she has been on Council working with Mayor Donchez we may not always agree but he has been unfailingly gracious and kind throughout the experience. She noted that his love of the City of Bethlehem is clear and much appreciated. He wanted to thank the other Council Members, Mr. Reynolds who she has a lot of

faith in with the upcoming years as well as Mr. Callahan, while we seldom if ever agree; his love of the City of Bethlehem is also clear and valid in his own eyes. She added that she thanks Mr. Waldron for his tenure as Council President, we may not always agree but he has been unfailingly professional and dedicated. Finally, she added that if not for Ms. Negrón, she would not be up here. She has big wings that people fit under and she took me under her wing and also stuck out her neck at considerable risk to her own election because she believed in me and that type of courage is appreciated. She hopes that on Council we can all replicate the courage that she has shown over the years of her service to Bethlehem.

*Thanks to Mayor Donchez/Good Luck-Mayor-Elect Reynolds and New Council*

Mr. Callahan congratulated Mayor Donchez on his retirement. He has done a heck of a job and he is deserving of his retirement years with his grandchildren. Mr. Callahan wanted to thank him for his devotion and his service to the City of Bethlehem. He wishes Mr. Reynolds and the new Council all the best. When he decided to run for City Council 8 years ago he stood in Payrow Plaza he told everyone that was there that he was going to continue to fight for economic development and keep our taxes low. If you look at his record over the last 8 years he was probably the biggest advocate for economic development, he does not think he ever voted against an economic development project and out of the 8 years he was on he only voted for one tax increase which was a small one. Mr. Callahan tried to stay true to what he ran on. He has not always gotten along with everybody on Council but he did always respect all of you even though a lot of you think my tone was off. He has a passion for Bethlehem and when he thinks that things are going the wrong way he speaks up on it. If he looks back there are probably times where he could have changed his tone. He grew up in a house with 4 Irish boys and you did not get too many things unless you spoke up loudly and he tries to speak with great passion and have a lot of energy the way he speaks and that probably ruffled a little bit of feathers with some people. He never preferred having conversations behind the scenes and lining up votes, he always prefers to have that kind of discussion in front of Council. Mr. Callahan always wanted to have the debate in front of Council and in front of the people. Some of you did not want to do that, he does understand that because some people do not want to have what you would think is a confrontational discussion but he never looked at it like that. He just wanted to put out his points of view and if you have better points then put them out there. If anybody was upset at him for any reason over the years because of his tone or attitude he does apologize. When he thought that some people were playing the taxpayers or playing the residents or voters, he tried to stand up and call that out. Mr. Callahan has enjoyed all his time on City Council, he has had a good time, it has been a great experience but it is time to move on. He did not lose too many votes in the 8 years and he just looked at the Council coming in here right now he cannot see that he would be on the winning end of a lot of votes in the next 4 years. He wishes all the new Council Members all the luck. He would ask that everybody on the new Council and Mr. Reynolds to take heed to the words of that taxpayer who spoke tonight. Mr. Callahan has said this before, if you own a rental property and you are renting it out, you are not going to lose money on that property. If the taxes go up you will raise you rental rate and also if fees go up. He had an inspector go through is property with a fine tooth comb and he had to spend about \$4,500 dollars in repairs on his property. He did not eat that cost, he had to raise his rates and if his School District taxes go up and his County and City taxes go up he has to raise his rental rates again. That is something that his renters have to pay for. So every time we raise fees, whether it is storm water fees, or taxes, or some other type of fee, that is getting passed onto the renter and what is making Bethlehem unaffordable for people. So when we talk about affordable housing he

is asking that Council look closely at the tax rates and other fees we are passing onto people. That is going directly to the bottom line of the renter, not the owner of the property. Mr. Callahan thanked Mr. Waldron and he knows he has tested his patience with him being President of Council and often walked a fine line in trying to give him his right to speak but also to maintain order. Mr. Callahan does appreciate Mr. Waldron's patience over the years. We were both voted in the same time and he thinks that Mr. Waldron understands his passion for the city. To the other Council Members, he appreciates all of your time and devotion to the city and he looks forward to his passion in promoting and supporting all the small businesses in the City of Bethlehem in the future. Mr. Callahan will probably be retiring from the School District soon to dedicate his time to his small business which has taken off and is taking a lot of his time. He is sure he will see everybody out at the restaurants around the City of Bethlehem. He thanked the residents of the City of Bethlehem and the people who voted for him in the years that he has won and this past year. He has had great thoughts and great memories of his time on Council.

President Waldron congratulated Mayor Donchez on putting together an excellent budget and that is a feather in your cap for the 8 years of leadership as Mayor and much longer service to the city. The city will miss his experience and leadership. Also to the other Members of Council that are going out with him, Mr. Callahan and Ms. Negrón, it has been a fun ride over these past 8 years and 4 years serving as Council President. He has grown a lot personally; his family has grown literally and figuratively over this time. This experience has taught him a lot about what helps makes a city run and the people who make that city run behind the scenes and in these rooms having these challenging conversations. Also sitting in those rooms and listening to public comment sometimes going into past midnight were things that he will think fondly of and also when he reads about it in the paper the next day when he thinks about the other folks who will be filling that role he will be glad he is not there as well. There were some challenging situations on some of those votes we had to make that would go 4-3 and hearing dozens of speakers come out and passionately talk about their issue, that is something we do not see in a lot of places. President Waldron thinks that is one of the things that makes Bethlehem special. He is glad to be a part of it for the 8 years that he was on Council and is happy to continue to live here with his family, grow his business here as well and he does wish to stay involved in the city and keep contributing in any way that he can. Also, best of luck to Mr. Reynolds who he has full faith in will carry the baton for Mayor Donchez with some great leadership and help continue to grow our city and make it an even better place to be in the Lehigh Valley and throughout Pennsylvania. He is thankful for the folks he got to meet in his 8 years on Council and everyone who put their time and effort in to making the City of Bethlehem what it has become today. Thank you all for having us be part of your city and governance.

Ms. Negrón congratulated and wanted to say thank you to Mayor Donchez for the great job he has done. Thank you for listening to her for the many times that she requested that more diversity be included in our committees. It was a struggle but you did do so, she is thankful for that. She knows that Mayor-Elect Reynolds will continue that and do even better. She is looking forward to the continuation of the growing of our beautiful city. To Members of Council thank you for the time and thank you to the voters for her opportunity to be on Council. She chose this time not to run for many reasons but one that is very important to her is that she believes that no elected official should be elected forever and there should be term limits for every elected official just like for Mayor. That will allow new ideas and new people sitting at this table bringing new ideas. The first time she ran she thought she would not win but there was never a woman of color on City Council. To her surprise she did it and is glad that she broke that wall and we are

now bringing more. She thanks Dr. Van Wirt for her service and for listening to her by pushing to keep on doing this. She did take the chance when Dr. Van Wirt ran that she could lose and that was okay with her. She is also grateful that she worked really hard with a couple of the new Councilwomen that will be here. Councilwoman Kiera Wilhelm and Rachel Leon, she worked hard to push them and get excited about running and they made it. Her promise to the community is that she is not going anywhere and will continue to make sure that this table is diverse. We are a diverse community and everyone should be represented. Ms. Negrón added that her oldest daughter moved to Bethlehem with her husband and daughter. As she knows that Mayor Donchez will be spending time with his grandchildren, so will she because her baby girl will be a mile away from her. She has already signed up for grandmother duties. She has a lot to look forward for. She thanks the City of Bethlehem for the support and if anyone is wondering how to run for City Council reach out to her because she will help. She will keep on pushing to make sure that diversity is included in all walls of this building.

Vice President Colón mentioned the he has known President Waldron from Liberty High School and he was one of the people when he started paying attention to what happens here in Town Hall to get elected. He was very encouraging and more importantly did a remarkable job as City Council President the last 4 years moderating these meetings and keeping things moving along, even when the discussion got excitable at times. He always would sprinkle in his own unique humor which he has appreciated. Vice President Colón noted that he and Ms. Negrón came onto Council at the same time together and he has always appreciated her unique perspective, enthusiasm, and passion. She has been an asset to City Council. Councilman Reynolds has been one of the most active Council Members in terms of legislation that the city has ever had, he is not going too far, we will see him after the New Year. We all have our full faith in Mr. Reynolds as Mayor that leadership will translate well to the Mayor's Office. As for Councilman Callahan, over the years we have served together sitting next to each other has brought forward a number of pieces of legislation that have been passed on issues that were important to him and were adopted by Council that will endure beyond his time here on Council. He thanks everyone who served with competency and integrity for the years beyond his involvement with City Council. Vice President Colón added that Mayor Donchez was one of the very first people outside of Town Hall too, when he started coming to these meetings, the first Council Meeting he ever came to was a budget hearing for water. Mayor Donchez was very open to answering his questions and fielding emails as he tried to figure out what goes on here at Town Hall and to everyone who is departing Member of Council and Mayor Donchez, he wishes you all the best moving forward. He is sure we may see you here first and third Tuesdays on occasion and more importantly he hopes that everyone has a wonderful time with your families that have lent you to us for all these years on these Tuesday nights and their understanding which is something he learned early on. This takes a lot of time to be here and also away from those that wish to have us at home. Thank you all. Vice President Colón wishes everyone who is watching at home and all of our residents a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Holiday Season. We will be back here on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## 12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.

ATTEST:

Robert G. Vidoni, Esq.  
City Clerk