

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, June 2, 2026 - 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by President Rachel Leon. Present were Justin Amann (arrived approximately 7:15 PM), Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Jo C. Daniels, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Colleen Laird, and Ms. Leon, 7.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 5, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Larry Kirk

Mr. Kirk thanked the City on behalf of several neighbors who raised concerns at the May 5 Council meeting about mounding garbage at a 1953 Eaton Avenue residence.

Sue Greathouse

Ms. Greathouse reported a weed problem at a neighboring property near her Valley Road home. She asked if an inspector could be sent to view conditions.

Jessica Unger

Ms. Unger said she and neighbors have received notice from the City that they must make costly repairs to curbing in the 200 block of 10th Avenue. She said UGI has done utility work that has caused the damage. She added that UGI committed to replaced damaged curbing.

Stephanie Szabo

Ms. Szabo also discussed concerns about the responsibility to repair curbing along 10th Avenue. She referred to a letter from Public Works advising neighbors they must pay to repair damaged curbing. She agreed with Ms. Unger that UGI caused the damage and promised to pay for repairs. She asked that Public Works discuss this with neighbors and UGI.

Alex Miller

Mr. Miller again urged the City and its Police Department to discontinue their association with Flock Safety amid growing concerns about invasion of privacy allegations stemming from surveillance cameras. He believes the City's contract, funded through a grant, with Flock Safety will be expiring soon and urged nonrenewal.

Daiyana Rodriguez

Ms. Rodriguez urged Council to regulate data centers as some other municipalities are doing. She warned that the City should not give up its natural resources for short-term gain.

Harry Faber

Mr. Faber offered "The Parable of the River" in which villagers disagreed over a solution to save babies from drowning in a river. He likened the task of saving these babies to society trying to fix issues including profit motive, increasing wealth and equality and the dismantling of welfare, capitalism, and white supremacy.

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer used a hypothetical situation to point out that what some might call taxes are often referred to as "fees" or "charges", such as the stormwater runoff assessment. In municipal finances, it is politically unpopular to raise property taxes, so these "add-ons" become popular tools for achieving the same end-result.

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola again denied that comments made several years ago during a Council meeting were intended to be antisemitic.

Terry Kloiber

Ms. Kloiber thanked the City for a prompt response to the petition that she presented last month asking for improved traffic safety measures in the Grandview Boulevard neighborhood. The City installed flashing speed signs, which have slowed the traffic considerably. She still hopes the City will provide flashing stop signs. She also encouraged neighborhoods with similar concerns to follow the City's proscribed procedures, including submitting a petition signed by at least 75 percent of affected neighbors, to get action.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics referred to the City's spring/summer 2026 magazine and an article outlining the City's intended conversion to two-way traffic on Linden Street. Mr. Antalics noted that there is no mention of returning Center Street to two-way traffic as well. Although the latter conversion is planned at a later date, he predicted that not converting the two parallel streets at the same time will cause traffic problems on side streets because area streets must work in concert.

Michael Pipestone

Mr. Pipestone urged Council to better moderate some public statements that are being made during meetings. He also said the changed stop sign orientation at 12th Avenue and Market Street is making a difference.

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

Harry Faber

Mr. Faber connected the parable he related earlier in relation to the proposed agreement with the Northampton County Drug Task Force. He said there is a long history of corruption involving police departments working with “elite task forces” nationally. He urged Council to reject this agreement.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Kwiatek

Ms. Kwiatek asked about the curbing mentioned earlier along 10th Avenue.

Public Works Director Michael Alkhal said that UGI typically reimburses the City or does the work of providing street overlays following utility work. This typically does not include curbing. The City was unaware if any promises were made by UGI to residents but agreed to look into the matter to learn the facts. Mr. Alkhal will check on the status of this inquiry.

Ms. Kwiatek also asked about the status of the contract with Flock Safety regarding the license plate readers.

Deputy Chief Scott Meixell believed the approximate \$41,000 contract would be due for renewal in July.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan said it seemed like a coincidence that so many residents in the 10th Avenue area would have curb damage at the same time. He also asked that the City take a gentler approach in working with the homeowners on this matter.

Mr. Alkhal said the City contacted affected residents because the street needs resurfacing. This triggers curbing evaluations. The City is now aware that there may be issues between the residents and UGI and staff has been advised to be patient and see where this leads.

Mr. Callahan next addressed regulating zoning for data centers. He is not in favor of data centers but believes that, by state law, every municipality must permit every allowable use somewhere within its borders.

Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward said data centers are specifically allowed in Bethlehem's Zoning Ordinance in certain districts. There are limitations on these uses and general requirements to control their impact, such as setbacks.

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. agreed that the City must provide for every lawful use somewhere and does.

Mr. Callahan asked for additional information on an emergency Fire Department response to the Walnut Street Parking Garage. An odor was detected over several days and was found to be emanating from the fire sprinkler room. Mr. Callahan has had concerns that substandard materials were used to construct the sprinkler system and wondered if there is a connection with the odor. He has asked the Community Development Committee chair to call a meeting to review Walnut Street Parking Garage construction matters; however, a meeting has not been scheduled.

Business Administrator Eric Evans suggested that Mr. Callahan attend a Bethlehem Parking Authority (BPA) meeting and ask his questions there.

Mr. Callahan said he has asked the BPA executive director and solicitor for building specifications and received resistance. Eventually he received information and believes that BPA received substandard materials while paying a higher price. He is seeking transparency and believes the BPA falls under the purview of City Council.

Solicitor Steward said the BPA is a Commonwealth agency, not a City department. It is BPA's contract to enforce, if it is dissatisfied with the performance of the contractor. City Council does not have oversight power over BPA.

Mr. Callahan also discussed affordable housing. He would like an update of the City's progress on this matter during a committee meeting, stating that he would like a different forum rather than simply attending the Administration's public updates under the "Opening Doors" initiative.

President Leon agreed that updates once or twice a year would be helpful, similar to the Financial Accountability Incentive Reporting (FAIR) hearing that is mandated.

Mr. Callahan expressed frustration over the length of time that it is taking to add to the housing stock, including affordable housing, and noted a Lehigh Valley Planning Commission estimate that Bethlehem has a housing shortage of about 1,300 rental units. He and Ms. Collins discussed planned housing projects and strategies to address the housing shortage, but he concluded that these are not capable of addressing the "monumental housing problem" facing the City. He asked why the Administration is not engaging in talks with the owner of the former Martin Tower land. If successful, this project could produce an estimated 1,080 market rate units within a few years and a discussed \$5 million contribution toward affordable housing. This project alone could nearly solve the City's housing shortage, he said. This project becoming a reality also would initiate tax income.

Ms. Collins countered that the City has 10 strategies for addressing the housing shortage. The total number of units from these initiatives should be considered. Building housing takes time. Meanwhile, market rate construction continues. For example, since 2018 the Planning and Zoning Bureau has approved 2,090 units.

Mr. Callahan suggested that the Administration should again consider offering a LERTA tax abatement program as an incentive to get this project built. Benefits to the City, he summarized, would include eventually generating tax income, gaining \$5 million toward affordable housing, and reducing the housing shortage.

Mr. Colón

Mr. Colón addressed earlier public comments and said that, while some disagree with their appropriateness, the first amendment permits free speech in general. He does not find this type of comment productive but knows that Council is meeting first amendment protections.

Ms. Laird

Ms. Laird noted growing privacy concerns nationally about Flock Safety devices. Police Chief Michelle Kott addressed these concerns some months ago in a memo, stating that the City protects the public's privacy. Ms. Laird asked if the privacy terms and additional details of the contract could be shared with Council before considering renewal.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. *Director of Public Works – 2026 21 Bernie Fritz, Madison and Clearview Parks Design – Pavement Study and Design – Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc.*

Public Works Director Michael Alkhal recommended an Agreement with Herbert, Rowland and Grubic, Inc. for the design of the three named parks – Item 10 A.

- B. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – 2026 TacoFest*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with ArtsQuest for 2026 TacoFest – Item 10 B.

- C. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Portuguese American Club – 2026 Portuguese Heritage Day Festival*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with the Portuguese American Club for the 2026 Portuguese Heritage Day Festival – Item 10 C.

- D. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Christmas City Spirits – 2026 Pride Party Palooza*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with Christmas City Spirits for the 2026 Pride Party Palooza – Item 10 D.

- E. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – 2026 Bethlehem Vintage Market*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with the Bethlehem Vintage Market for the 2026 Bethlehem Vintage Market – Item 10 E.

F. City Solicitor – Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement (ICA) – Northeast Interceptor Capital Improvement

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended an Agreement titled “Northeast Interceptor Capital Improvements with Bethlehem Township, the Bethlehem Township Municipal Authority, the Borough of Freemansburg, and 1600 Freemansburg Ave., LLC – Item 10 F.

G. Director of Financial Services – Memo – Records Destruction

Director of Financial Services Joseph Vlossak sought authorization to properly destroy public records from his department – Resolution placed on June 16, 2026 agenda.

H. City Solicitor – Memo – Article 1731 and Article 119 Revisions

Assistant City Solicitor Matthew Deschler recommended amending Article 1731 involving inspections and a section of Article 119 relating to Registration, Sale, and Transfer of Real Estate to ensure consistency with Article 1731 – Ordinance placed on June 16, 2026 agenda for First Reading.

I. City Solicitor – Memo – Zoning Text Amendments Ordinance 2026

Assistant City Solicitor Matthew Deschler recommended amendments that would modify the definition of “hotel” in the Zoning Ordinance so as to include transient guests and related matters. The amendments would have the effect of excluding short-term rentals in residential districts where hotels are prohibited along with other proposed amendments.

Motion to schedule a public hearing for 7 PM on July 7 to consider these Zoning Ordinance amendments and to forward these proposed changes to the City’s Planning Commission and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission for recommendations; Laird, Kwiatek. AYE: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Motion passed.

J. Director of DCED – Memo – 2026 28 BEDCO Activities

Director of Community and Economic Development, Laura Collins, recommended an agreement with the Bethlehem Economic Development Corporation to carry out the programs and/or targeted activities of BEDCO including: administration, programs and activities, waive right-of-way fees and compensation for other projects as assigned in connection with the execution of City-sponsored events on an “as-needed” basis. The cost is not to exceed \$15,000. The contract runs through December 31, 2026, and there are no renewals – Item 10 J.

K. *City Solicitor – Memo – Northampton County Drug Task Force Agreement*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk Jr. recommended an Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding for the City and its Police Department to participate in the Northampton County Drug Task Force – Item 10 K.

6 L. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – Holy Infancy Church – 2026 Holy Infancy Cultural Celebration*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with Holy Infancy Church for the 2026 Holy Infancy Cultural Celebration – Item 10 L.

6 M. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – 2026 Soccerfest*

City Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Use Permit Agreement with ArtsQuest for the 2026 Soccerfest – Item 10 M.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

President Leon reported on the May 12 Committee of the Whole meeting with its sole agenda item of ethics training provided by the state Ethics Commission. The biennial training meets the City's Article 104 requirement.

B. *Mayor*

Mr. Evans announced on behalf of Mayor J. William Reynolds that a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held May 16 to celebrate the refurbished Friendship Park. He added that all five City pools will open on June 6.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

None.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – 2026 21 Bernie Fritz, Madison and Clearview Parks Design – Pavement Study and Design – Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc.*

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Amann; Authorized to execute an Agreement with Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc. to provide design and engineering services for Bernie Fritz, Madison, and Clearview parks.

Ms. Daniels said there seems to be a large gap in equality among the three parks chosen for the first round of this parks rehabilitation program, "40 in 10". Madison Park on the South Side planning documents and spending are considerably inferior to Clearview and Bernie Fritz Parks. She also noted that \$1.4 million was spent to rehabilitate Friendship Park compared to up to \$250,000 for Madison.

Ms. Collins noted that illustrative drawings were only done for a handful of the City's parks as samples. This was not meant to show favoritism. Additionally, all parks are not the same size and will not offer the same features, so there will be differences in spending.

Ms. Daniels was especially concerned because she said the North Side has received more than \$7 million into parks improvements compared to a little over \$200,000 on the South Side within the past five years.

Ms. Collins noted that the contract being voted on tonight is for final design and engineering for these three parks. Madison improvements are highlighted by the addition of a splashpad, which is a costly feature and is recommended because the closest pool is at Yosko Park. Madison also is not a large park that offers a lot of options. Ms. Collins added that this is a 10-year plan and believed that there will be more equity over the totality once the plan is fully implemented.

Ms. Daniels raised the possibility of reconsidering the order in which the parks would be improved and delaying tonight's. She believed the three should be more equal in scope and cost.

Ms. Kwiatek asked about funding for Friendship Park and was told by Ms. Collins that it met HUD requirements and received considerable grant funding. Ms. Kwiatek also pointed out that three more parks will be chosen for planning and rehabilitation next year and more in the future. There should be more balance as the plan progresses.

Mr. Colón believed this vote should not be postponed. He reasoned that the responding firms bid on planning work for the three parks selected by the City. Council members either support the contract or they do not. The scope of the work could not be changed.

Ms. Laird, who chairs the Parks and Recreation Committee, wanted to be sure that that panel would have the opportunity for deliberation and comment as the process progresses for each park. Mr. Alkhal said that would be most appropriate after the preliminary designs are presented.

President Leon observed that there seems to be a desire to hold more committee meetings on this topic as the "40 in 10 Program" progresses, and it will be her intention to do so. She also offered that some recreational elements, such as ArtsQuest and The Greenway, exist on the South Side but "feel" like they are citywide. In terms of equity and justice, she asked the Administration to keep this in mind and consider adding more as "40 in 10" progresses for true South Side parks. She said this was not mishandled but it appears that Council would like to see a different approach going forward.

AYE: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-084 passed.

Motion to combine Items 10 B through 10 E and 10 L and 10 M: Laird, Kwiatek. AYE: Callahan, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 6; ABSENT: Colón, 1. Motion passed.

B. Approve Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – 2026 TacoFest

Agreement with ArtsQuest to affirm execution of a Use Permit Agreement for 2026 TacoFest;

C. Approve Use Permit Agreement – Portuguese American Club – 2026 Portuguese Heritage Day Festival

Agreement with the Portuguese American Club to execute a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Portuguese Heritage Day Festival;

D. Approve Use Permit Agreement – Christmas City Spirits – 2026 Pride Party Palooza

Agreement with Christmas City Spirits to execute a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Pride Party Palooza;

E. Approve Use Permit Agreement – Bethlehem Vintage Market – 2026 Bethlehem Vintage Market

Agreement with the Bethlehem Vintage Market to affirm execution of a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Bethlehem Vintage Market.

F. Approve Resolution – Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement (ICA) – Northeast Interceptor Capital Improvement

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Amann; Authorized to execute an Agreement titled “Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement Northeast Interceptor Capital Improvements.” AYE: Callahan, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 6; ABSENT: Colón, 1. Resolution 2026-089 passed.

Motion to combine Items 10 G through 10 I: Callahan, Kwiatek. AYE: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Motion passed.

G. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 56 East Market Street to repaint the main house yellow and the trim white to restore the building to its original colors;

H. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 91 and 97 West Broad Street (Sun Inn) to paint the rear of the buildings to match the surrounding buildings; and

I. Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 36 East Wall Street to install a Federal Style brass light on the front facing façade of the building.

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Amann AYE for 10 G through 10 I: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Resolutions 2026-090 through 2026-092 passed.

J. Approve Resolution – 2026 28 BEDCO Activities

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Amann; Authorized to execute with BEDCO to carry out programs and activities, as assigned, in connection with execution of City-sponsored events. AYE: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Resolution 2026-093 passed.

K. Approve Resolution – Northampton County Drug Task Force Agreement

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Amann; Authorized to execute an Intergovernmental Agreement involving the Northampton County Drug Task Force.

Ms. Laird asked for clarification about the working relationship with the task force.

Deputy Chief Meixell said the City has participated in this task force for years. The agreement gets renewed under new district attorneys. The City has participated in this for decades. This agreement allows the City to be reimbursed for overtime paid to its officers for their participation.

AYE: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Laird, Amann, Leon, 6; NAY: Kwiatek, 1. Resolution 2026-094 passed.

L. Approve Use Permit Agreement – Holy Infancy Church – 2026 Holy Infancy Cultural Celebration

Agreement with Holy Infancy Church to execute a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Holy Infancy Cultural Celebration; and

M. Approve Use Permit Agreement – ArtsQuest – 2026 Soccerfest

Agreement with ArtsQuest to execute a Use Permit Agreement for the 2026 Soccerfest.

Sponsors: Kwiatek; Amann. AYE for 10 B through 10 E and 10 L through 10 M: Callahan, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 6; ABSENT: Colón, 1. Resolutions 2026-085 through 2026-088 and 2026-095 and 2026-096 passed.

Motion to combine Items 10 N through 10 Q: Amann, Callahan. AYE: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Motion passed.

N. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 211 Mechanic Street to rehabilitate the building facades;

O. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 313 East Third Street to rehabilitate the front facade;

P. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 330 East Third Street to construct a new mixed-use building, with one commercial space and four dwelling units; and

Q. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 335-339 West Fourth Street to demolish the existing 3-story annex in order to construct a new 4-story annex building.

Sponsors: Kwiatek, Amann; AYE for 10 N through 10 Q: Callahan, Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Laird, Amann, Leon, 7. Resolutions 2026-097 through 2026-100 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 10:39 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk