

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
10 East Church Street - Town Hall  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, July 1, 2025 – 7:00 PM

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by President Michael G. Colón. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Grace Crampsie Smith, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Colleen Laird, Kiera Wilhelm, and Michael G. Colón, 6; Absent was Rachel Leon, 1.

PUBLIC HEARING:

President Colón stated prior to the consideration of the regular Agenda items, City Council will conduct a Public Hearing to review the City's Department of Community and Economic Development's 2025 CDBG/HOME funding recommendations.

The Clerk read a June 25, 2025 memorandum from Robert Vidoni, Housing and Community Development Administrator, submitting materials for review by City Council during this evening's Public Hearing for the 2025 Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships Program allocations. For Program Year 2025, the City will receive \$1,418,306 in CDBG funds and \$417,183.96 in HOME money.

President Colón called the Public Hearing to order and stated he will recognize Robert Vidoni, DCED's Housing and Community Development Administrator, to make a presentation and then accept Council questions and public comment on the 2025 CDBG/HOME funding recommendations.

Mr. Vidoni said the CDBG allocation increased about \$3,000 over last year's figure. The HOME allocation increased by \$25,889.96. Funding for both comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. CDBG funds benefit low- to moderate-income populations. Funding is designed to prevent or eliminate slums or blight or address urgent community needs. It supports community development activities directed at revitalizing neighborhoods, economic development, and improving activities and services. The HOME program funds housing activities including direct rental and purchase assistance, and building, acquiring and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or ownership.

Mr. Vidoni outlined the 20 CDBG projects totaling \$1,418,306 being recommended for approval. Only three requests were not funded. Those recommended for funding are as follows:

1. CDBG Program Administration - \$283,661;
2. Community Action Development Bethlehem Tenant Advocacy Program - \$15,000;
3. Bethlehem Emergency Shelter homeless shelter support - \$67,746;
4. Hogar CREA Women's Center substance abuse program support - \$20,000;

5. Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living PLACE Program housing services - \$15,000;
6. Faith in Action (ShareCARE) Volunteer Caregiving - \$10,000;
7. Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley Food Pantry - \$20,000;
8. New Bethany, Inc. Representative Payee Program - \$50,000;
9. North Penn Legal Services fair housing services - \$15,000;
10. Community Action Lehigh Valley Housing Assistance Program - \$25,000;
11. Community Action Development Bethlehem Exterior Façade Program - \$66,000;
12. City Housing Rehabilitation Grants and Loans - \$358,658;
13. City Housing Rehab Program Delivery- \$241,500;
14. New Bethany, Inc. Homeless Drop-In Center Improvements - \$75,000;
15. Holy Family Manor Fire Protection Improvements - \$75,000;
16. Goepp Street Corridor Improvements - \$199,990;
17. 4<sup>th</sup> Street corridor improvements - 100,000;
18. Future Projects/Future Grants - \$53,104;
19. Northside Alive Strategy - \$24,710; and
20. City of Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority Blight Elimination Program - \$30,641.

There were 15 external (non-City) CDBG funding applications, 13 of which were funded. Unfunded requesters are urged to apply again during the next cycle, which will be in fall and winter of this year. The amount of public service requests is capped at 15 percent (about \$212,000), which is a significant limitation placed on the program.

Recommended HOME-funded (a type of affordable housing funding) projects are as follows:

21. HOME Program Administration - \$41,718;
22. Community Housing Development Organization Community Action Lehigh Valley - \$62,578; and
23. HOME Affordable Housing Project Opportunities - \$312,888.

After tonight's Public Hearing, a Resolution will be offered at the July 15 meeting for potential Council approval of this funding proposal.

#### *Council Questions*

Ms. Laird asked for confirmation that this money serves as reimbursement funding. Mr. Vidoni said yes.

Ms. Laird noted Mr. Vidoni's comments that these HUD programs are highly regulated and somewhat onerous. She asked whether some of the funding could be used to create "tools" to help organizations navigate the process.

Mr. Vidoni said that providing technical assistance to individuals and organizations is a huge part of what the City staff does. This is why HUD allows for reimbursement of administrative costs of up to 20 percent of the total allocation.

Ms. Laird asked whether it is still a challenge to get contractors to participate in the building façade program.

Mr. Vidoni said the challenge remains. Compliance-related issues, added paperwork, etc. leave some quality contractors not wishing to participate.

Ms. Laird alluded to future federal funding questions. She asked the chances of this funding continuing.

Mr. Vidoni said he would not consider the chances to be solid. The situation in Washington is fluid. So far, funding has not been cut either in part or in full. He will continue to monitor the situation.

Mr. Callahan asked about the proposed administrative cost allocation. He noted that, by law, this can only be 20 percent of the total funding amount from CDBG and 10 percent for HOME money. Mr. Callahan asked how many City employees work on these programs.

Mr. Vidoni said four plus perhaps a few part-timers. No one works on CDBG or HOME projects as the sole function of their job. He estimated that this work is 50 percent of his job.

Mr. Callahan observed that the more than \$325,000 from the two allocations that reimburses administrative costs is a lot of money that could be used directly for community programs. It is his opinion that these administrative reimbursements are nearly subsidizing the City's DCED department.

Mr. Vidoni said grant compliance is a large part of the justification. There is a lot of work involved in meeting the requirements. The time costs money.

Laura Collins, Director of Community and Economic Development, added that HUD sets the 20 percent cap because it believes that this is a fair amount for municipalities to receive to administer the program and adhere to regulations. Bethlehem runs a lean program. For example, Allentown has about three times the number of employees working on its program. She believes that most municipalities allot the 20 percent on compliance. Bethlehem also has a HUD consultant, Michael Baker International, that assists with compliance. HUD recommends using a consultant. Ms. Collins added that the City is required to track employees' time used to administer the program.

Mr. Callahan asked if unused administrative funding could be rolled over and used for organizational needs if it is found that not all allotted time is used.

Ms. Collins said yes but it could not be used for projects in the public service category because the 15 percent limit is always met.

Mr. Callahan asked for a report back to Council on the salaries and the amount billed of those who work on the CDBG and HOME programs. He said he hoped to get a better handle for next year's allocations.

Ms. Wilhelm observed that the administrative allocation is serving organizations, since there are extensive interactions between those groups and the City employees who help coordinate the efforts.

Ms. Crampsie Smith noted that North Penn Legal Services requested \$25,000 but received an allotment of \$15,000. This is an entity that can help keep people in their homes and performs important services.

Mr. Vidoni reminded of the 15 percent cap that limits the amount that can be spent on public services. The City also recently gave this agency additional funding from other sources.

Ms. Crampsie Smith also questioned the Goepp Street corridor allocation of \$199,990. This seems like a lot of money to be spent on a street that is not high in pedestrian traffic. She believes the North Penn Legal Services need is greater, especially with the current economic and affordable housing crises.

Mr. Vidoni said the two allocations are in different categories. North Penn Legal Services falls under the public services category and the 15 percent cap. The Goepp Street project is in a different category without restriction.

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked whether some or all of the Goepp Street money could be transferred to another project related to a greater need, such as affordable housing.

Ms. Collins emphasized this could not be applied to public services and added that there were no other proposed projects that were submitted this year that could use the money.

Mayor J. William Reynolds added that City staff will contact organizations that fit a certain dynamic if they are looking to match funding dollars with potential worthy projects. In this case, none was found. He added that few organizations participate because of the onerous regulations. They often do not have the staff to take on the compliance.

Ms. Crampsie Smith asked whether some of this money could be transferred to maintain streets, noting that this was done in the past.

Ms. Collins said such projects would have to meet the criteria, most especially serving low- to moderate-income areas. The Goepp Street area meets the criteria.

President Colón asked about those few projects that were not funded this year.

Mr. Vidoni said that one of the three was a grantee last year. The other two with some alterations with their application have future funding potential.

Ms. Collins added that those who were not funded have applied for money through the Community Recovery Fund. This fund was created with the goal of being more flexible. Those grantees should be announced in fall.

*Public Comment*

Resident Michael O'Hare asked whether the \$1.4 million in CDBG money and \$417,000 in HOME money is for one year or spread over five years, since there was reference to a five-year planning cycle. He also noted that there are four census tracts in the City that are the most disadvantaged. He did not believe there is an adequate proportion benefitting the South Side areas and the Marvine-Pembroke area. Mr. O'Hare also wondered how the City identifies homes with inadequate bathroom or kitchen facilities, as is one factor in CDBG funding consideration. Mr. O'Hare had emailed these questions to Mr. Vidoni. He had not yet received a reply. President Colón asked Mr. Vidoni to respond to these questions at his earliest convenience.

Resident Stephen Antalics noted the dramatic change of the structure of housing on the South Side. Fifty or so years ago it was largely single-family-owned residential properties. When homeowners rented to Lehigh students, it was done by the room. Today, a center core of the South Side is student housing. This has affected the quality of life there. He was unsure whether this was a factor that could be considered in terms of need.

President Colón stated that a Resolution will be placed on Council's July 15, 2025 meeting. He adjourned the Public Hearing at 8:10 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 17, 2025

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

*Supportive of Bethlehem Police*

Resident Arthur Curatola commended the Bethlehem Police Department and said it deserves the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistant Grant that the City applies for annually. He related a personal negative interaction with police in New Jersey, and was grateful for the positive reputation of Bethlehem police.

*City Guide/Immigration Responses*

Resident William Scheirer said the new map and guide of the City does not include West Side attractions. It only includes listings of North Side and South Side features. He made this observation some months ago about the last printed version. He also applauded Police Chief Michelle Kott's responses about immigration in the current edition of the Bethlehem Press. He called the comments "thoughtful" and "sensitive." He additionally asked what can we do to stop the senseless abduction of working people. He suggested publicizing the names of the abductees.

*Obeying Signs*

Resident Brett Schaefer said a sign asks all to respect Town Hall and prohibits food or drinks except water inside. He said Mr. Callahan had food at the dais during the last Council meeting.

Mr. Callahan responded that he ate a pretzel and apologized.

President Colón asked the resident to address the Chair rather than individuals. He also advised Mr. Callahan to allow the speaker to finish with Public Comment. After order was restored, Mr. Schaefer emphasized the words, "please respect."

*Employer Responsibility*

Resident Michael O'Hare noted recent discussions about the ICE raid in the City last month. One element he has not heard discussed is employer responsibility. Employers are responsible for properly vetting employees and that they are working legally and following all laws. He said this is not Council's responsibility, but he wanted to remind Council of the employer's responsibility. Mr. O'Hare also stated that people tend to treat you the way you treat them. If the City is going to adopt a posture of non-cooperation the federal government, then the federal government is likely to treat the City that way as well. The City should, in appropriate ways, cooperate with federal authorities.

*Public Servants/Lost History*

Resident Stephen Antalics believed discussion at a recent meeting was the fourth time residents have noted a traffic concern involving Pennsylvania Avenue. He additionally stated that it took the provoking by a resident for Council to respond to the concern during New Business. He reminded that Council is to serve the public. Mr. Antalics additionally discussed how the South Side has changed. Gone are the old neighborhood businesses. Today, an empty lot awaits the new ArtsQuest building. This also represents the ongoing destruction of South Side history. He lamented Council's vote for a Certificate of Appropriateness to raze the old Banana Factory and construct a new building. He believes that Council members with minimal residency voted for the replacement without giving proper appreciation to the history that will be lost.

*Boycott Musikfest*

Resident Harry Faber discussed the purpose of the demonstration during the June 17 meeting. Speakers collectively used 17 minutes during Public Comment to remember the 17 workers taken by ICE from the Five 10 Flats work site. City government is not capable of protecting its residents. He now believes that those taken, and those like them, have been enslaved. Mr. Faber said he will not be attending the upcoming Musikfest, and he encourages all to boycott the City event as well until Bethlehem terminates all ICE collaboration, until this administration participates in community actions such as the Emergency Response Network, and until the 17 people taken away are returned. This is not a time to celebrate.

*No Ideas Offered*

Resident Valerie Noonan was disappointed with the way the last meeting was run. She believes that moving Public Comment to the end of the meeting failed as a strategy. Many in the audience took this as contempt. There were no ideas, solutions, or information offered by the City about the ICE raid or what to do next.

*Seeking Support*

Resident Sebastian Zawierucha again discussed a letter that he suggested during the June 17 Council meeting could be adapted into a Resolution of Council affirming its support of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments. He said that most on Council asked for additional time to consider the letter before signing it. He said he would discuss afterward efforts to gain their signatures.

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

None.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

*Ms. Kwiatek*

Ms. Kwiatek said she does not “scream” her views from the dais but is more vocal on forums from home. She applauded those who speak out on issues including the federal government’s actions toward immigrants. She also appreciated efforts by DCED for the trip to Philadelphia to meet with their Housing Authority and hear about efforts to increase affordable housing. This was done as information for Bethlehem in regard to its Choice Neighborhoods grant project.

*Mr. Callahan*

Mr. Callahan asked Chief Kott for an update on a recent shooting at Yosko Park.

Chief Kott said this incident remains under investigation, so she cannot release details. However, the investigation is progressing.

Mr. Callahan also asked about a standoff on New Street.

The Chief characterized this as a domestic incident. A man barricaded himself inside the residence. Police were able to get him to come outside.

Mr. Callahan apologized for having a bag of pretzels at the dais during the last meeting.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *Business Administrator – Golf Course Clubhouse Grille, LLC – Lease Agreement 2025*

The Clerk read a June 24, 2025 memorandum and proposed Lease Agreement and Resolution from Business Administrator Eric Evans. The memorandum recommends a Lease Agreement involving the Clubhouse Grille, LLC for a restaurant at the Bethlehem Golf Club. The current lease with the same entity is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2025. The action tonight would authorize a 7-year extension beginning January 1, 2026 and ending on December 31, 2032.

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

B. *Director of Financial Services – 2025 Memo Records Destruction – Financial Services*

The Clerk read a June 20, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Joseph Vlossak, Director of Financial Services, requesting the Destruction of Records from his department. Mr. Vlossak has reviewed the Municipal Records Retention Act, and the records listed on the exhibit accompanying the memo fall within the categories where destruction is permitted.

President Colón said a Resolution will be placed on the July 15 Council agenda.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

President Colón reported that the Police Pension Board Appeal Hearing for former Officer John Repsher that was scheduled for June 24 has been rescheduled for 6 PM on August 12 in Town Hall. He also reminded that a Public Hearing has been scheduled for 7 PM on July 15 in Town Hall to review extensive amendments to the City's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

President Colón addressed the earlier heated exchange concerning the eating of food in Town Hall as well as some other recent exchanges during meetings. He has always tried to express civility by referring to people professionally and not interrupting unless it is to stop the use of foul language. Emotions can run high but he asked for maturity and respect both from Council and the public.

B. *Mayor*

Mayor Reynolds again stated that Fire Chief Michael Reich will retire from the Department this week. The Mayor commended the "fantastic" job that Chief Reich has done in his year as chief and his nearly three decades as a City firefighter. Captain Matthew Griffin will take over as chief on July 4. The Mayor also introduced Cathy Fletch as the new Director of Planning and Zoning replacing the retired Darlene Heller. He also announced that he and



Janine Santoro, Director of Equity and Inclusion, will be hosting a panel discussion and flag-raising ceremony from 11 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on July 26 in commemoration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. He hopes this will become an annual event.

C. *Committee Chairs*

None.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8A. *Bill No. 31-2025 – Trailer Mounted Leaf Collector – PA DEP Grant – Budget Adjustment – Non-Utility Capital Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 31-2025 – Trailer Mounted Leaf Collector – PA DEP Grant Budget Adjustment – Non-Utility Capital Fund, sponsored by Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm, and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
AMENDING THE 2025 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR NON-UTILITIES

Voting AYE: Ms. Laird, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 31-2025, now known as Ordinance No. 2025-29, passed on Final Reading.

8B. *Bill No. 32-2025 – Electrical Street Lights Repair/Replacement – Budget Adjustment – General Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 32-2025 – Electrical Street Lights Repair/Replacement – General Fund, sponsored by Ms. Crampsie Smith and Ms. Wilhelm, and titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,  
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
AMENDING THE GENERAL FUND FOR 2025

Voting AYE: Ms. Laird, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 32-2025, now known as Ordinance No. 2025-30, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – Golf Course Clubhouse Grille, LLC – Lease Agreement 2025*

Ms. Leon and Ms. Crampsie Smith sponsored Resolution No. 2025-113 that authorized to execute a Lease Agreement with the Clubhouse Grille, LLC and any agreements and documents as deemed necessary by the City Solicitor for a restaurant at the Bethlehem Golf Club.

Voting AYE: Ms. Laird, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 6. The Resolution passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 8:57 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller  
City Clerk