

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, February 17, 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, Bryan G. Callahan, Michael G. Colón, Jo C. Daniels, Hillary G. Kwiatek, and Ms. Leon, 6; Absent was Colleen Laird, 1.

CITATIONS HONORING: Thomas Ridgick – Public Works, Streets Bureau
Richard Petfield – WSR, Meter Shop
Lieut. Michael DiLuzio - Police

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 3, 2026

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Robert Drexinger

Mr. Drexinger said he wanted to expose “systemic problems and misconduct” by members of the Bethlehem Parking Authority (BPA) pertaining to a parking ticket that he received during Musikfest. He disputed the ticket and showed BPA employees proof of a kiosk malfunction, but he said he was rudely treated and was told the ticket was valid. That ruling was overturned during an appeal before a magistrate. Mr. Drexinger wanted Council to be aware of events and the treatment he received. President Leon said that BPA liaison Bryan Callahan could further discuss this matter with him, and he could speak with any Council member following tonight’s meeting.

Girl Scout Troop 82008

Members of the troop that meets at Calypso Elementary School offered a PowerPoint presentation titled “Clear Our Corners.” They identified the need for the community to better clear snow from street corners to allow safe passage. Troop members proposed an information campaign including fliers, posters, social media postings, and videos to alert the community of the problem and ask for their assistance in doing their part.

Harry Faber

Mr. Faber encouraged Council to pass a resolution condemning the rise of fascism in America, as Lehigh County commissioners did last week.

Alex Miller

Mr. Miller appreciated Police Chief Michelle Kott's information stemming from concerns he raised about Flock Safety during the February 3 Council meeting. He has found Bethlehem's use of the license plate readers provided by Flock to be more responsible than many agencies in protecting the data received. However, he does not believe the benefit to the department is worth the risk of Flock turning over the data to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement or other police agencies. He encouraged termination of the contract.

Martin Romeril

Mr. Romeril referred to Article 1713 which outlines the powers and duties of the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). The board currently has six of the nine members that 1713 allows. This is an important board and he would like to see the vacant seats filled. Mr. Romeril offered his services to become a volunteer board member.

Mary Jo Makoul

Ms. Makoul said the City's Fire Department is understaffed. Supporting public servants should be a higher priority.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics said the contract awarded on February 3 to the Center for Public Safety Management, LLC to study fire and ambulance services was unnecessary. Many firefighters spoke on November 18 during budget hearings in support of increasing staffing. The problem has been identified and the City would save \$83,000 by forgoing the contract. He further suggested that if a study is necessary, the International Association of Fire Fighters should be used.

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola recommended that the City invest in heating units to melt snow and ice removed from streets. This would save time and expense in transporting the removed snow 2 miles or so.

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

Martin Romeril

Mr. Romeril believed actions taken at the February 4 HARB meeting are invalid including a recommendation for Council to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for 33 W. Walnut Street. Mr. Romeril provided a copy of Administrative Order No. 2021-21 in which Mike

Simonson's term expired after January of 2026. He has not been reappointed. Mr. Romeril said this would mean that only four valid HARB members voted, not the five required for a quorum. He asked Council to ask Solicitor Stephanie Steward if Council can vote on agenda Item 10 D on tonight's agenda under these circumstances.

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer said the urban renewal concept of decades ago was a mistake and predicted that allowing the proposed seven-story construction at 33 W. Walnut Street also would be a mistake, detracting from the historic charm of Main Street.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics noted the vast change to the South Side and that much of its architectural history has been replaced. He warned that this may spread to the North Side. The proposed seven-story building at 33 W. Walnut Street would be overwhelming. He warned that the "developer dollar" is taking over.

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola said that tall buildings should be built in appropriate places, not among historical landmarks on or near Main Street. He wanted to see the historical nature remain the same.

4. OLD BUSINESS

A. Members of Council

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan asked Fire Chief Matthew Griffin whether he has gathered previously requested fire and EMS call numbers to Lehigh and Moravian universities and St. Luke's Hospital. The Chief said there has not been time but reminded that he provided five years' worth of data in November. It is complex to search the many individual addresses. Mr. Callahan asked for a rough number of calls to these nonprofit institutions perhaps with someone from each station providing a weekly total to gauge the number of calls for service. He would like to use these statistics to recover costs to pay for more firefighters.

B. Tabled Items

C. Unfinished Business

5. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Daniels

Ms. Daniels was concerned about property owners not clearing snow on sidewalks. She is not interested in revenue generated by fines but the fines are necessary to ensure compliance to allow safe passage. Public Works Director Michael Alkhal said inspectors are sent to properties

where complaints are received. Mayor Reynolds said it is also a balance of sensitivity that some homeowners are elderly and have difficulty arranging snow removal. Ms. Daniels added that her primary concern is the chronic offenders whose violations may include snow removal, tall weeds and grass, damaged sidewalks, and other property or building maintenance issues.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan would like to hold a committee meeting in the coming months to discuss various BPA issues. He cited Mr. Drexinger's earlier comments. He also believed that the BPA allowed an additional bid to rebuild the Walnut Street Garage for consideration after the submission deadline. Some specifications, specifically the piping for the fire sprinkler system, have not been adhered to. There has been a lack of transparency by BPA. He wants these matters discussed.

Mr. Colón

Mr. Colón believed the appropriate committee to discuss BPA would be the Community Development Committee. He also suggested that individual disagreements involving the public should first be taken to the BPA board meetings if satisfaction has not been reached with BPA employees before being brought to Council.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *Director of Public Works – Signature Authority Delegation for the Hill-to-Hill Bridge Project Documents*

Michael Alkhal sought authorization for the Mayor and any other authorized City officials to execute documents required for the PennDOT expansion of the Hill-to-Hill Bridge and to provide necessary rights-of-way and easements for the project – Item 10 A.

B. *Chief of Police – Handgun Purchase for Retiring Captain Michael Leaser*

Chief Michelle Kott recommended an Agreement for the purchase of a duty weapon by a retiring police officer – Item 10 B.

C. *City Solicitor – Right-of-Way Access Agreement – Greenlight Networks PA, LLC*

Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. recommended a Right-of-Way Access Agreement associated with Greenlight Networks PA, LLC to install fiber optic cables – Item 10 C.

D. *Director of Budget and Finance – Amendment to Bill No. 12-2026 – Non-Utility Capital Improvement Fund*

Linnea Lazarchak recommended an amendment to Bill No. 12-2026 that would decrease by \$30,000 the proposed annual adjustment to East Broad Street Corridor accounts in the Non-Utility Capital Improvements Fund – Item 8 J.

7. REPORTS

A. *President of Council*

President Leon reminded that the Committee of the Whole will meet at 6 PM on February 24 in Town Hall for ethics training provided by the state Ethics Commission. This is a public meeting. No action will be taken. She also announced that the March 3 regular Council meeting will be cancelled.

B. *Mayor*

No report.

C. *Committee Reports*

7 C1. *Finance Committee – Mr. Colón*

Mr. Colón announced that the Finance Committee will meet at 6 PM on March 17. The agenda will include budget adjustments for 2025 year-end reconciliation of water and sewer funds.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

Mr. Callahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Colón, to consider Items 8 A through 8 I as a group. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Motion passed.

8A. *Bill No. 03-2026 – Year-End Reconciliation 2025 – Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8B. *Bill No. 04-2026 – Office Furniture Carryover (0601 and 0507) Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8C. *Bill No. 05-2026 – 2024 Police – Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) – Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8D. *Bill No. 06-2026 – Fire Dept. – FM Global Grant (iPads) – Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8E. *Bill No. 07-2026 – Fire Dept. – Pipeline Emergency Response Grant (PERG) – Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8F. *Bill No. 08-2026 – PA Dept. of Health – Promising Maternal Health Initiatives – Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8G. *Bill No. 09-2026 – Emergency Housing-Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) – Budget Transfer – General Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8H. *Bill No. 10-2026 – Transfer of Staffing Levels in WSR – Salaries – Budget Adjustment – Water Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE WATER FUND BUDGET FOR 2026

8I. *Bill No. 11-2026 – Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) – Community Development Block Grant – Budget Transfer – CDBG Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
FUND FOR 2026

AYE for Items 8 A through 8 I: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Bills No. 03-2026 through 11-2026, now known as Ordinances No. 2026-03 through 2026-11, passed on Final Reading.

8J. *Bill No. 12-2026 – Year-End Adjustments – Budget Transfer – Non-Utility Capital Fund*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek. The Clerk read the Bill titled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM,
COUNTIES OF LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
THE NON-UTILITY CAPITAL FUND FOR 2026

An amendment was offered, based on agenda Item 6 D. The Clerk read the amendment.

SECTION 1. That total appropriations in the 2026 Budget for Non-Utilities Capital Fund be increased from Thirty-Nine Million, Twenty-Five Thousand, Three Hundred Twenty-Three (\$39,025,323) Dollars to Forty-One Million, Two Hundred Forty-Eight Thousand, One Hundred Nineteen (\$41,248,119) Dollars.

Sponsor: Amann, Kwiatek.

Vote to amend Bill – AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Amendment passed.

Mr. Colón called for a point of order and asked whether this would require an additional reading. President Leon said that Solicitor Steward considered the change di minimis, which did

not require readvertising the Bill or an additional reading.

Vote on amended Bill - AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Bill No. 12-2026, now known as Ordinance No. 2026-12, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – Signature Authority Delegation for the Hill-to-Hill Bridge Project Documents*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek; Agreement with PennDOT accepting authorized signatures and granting rights-of-way and easements for the project. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-025 passed.

B. *Approve Resolution – Handgun Purchase for Retiring Captain Michael Leaser*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek; Agreement with retiring Captain Michael Leaser to purchase his duty weapon. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Laird, Callahan, Leon, 5; NAY: Kwiatek, 1. Resolution 2026-026 passed.

C. *Approve Resolution – Right-of-Way Access Agreement – Greenlight Networks PA, LLC*

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek; Agreement with the Greenlight Networks PA, LLC granting right-of-way access for fiber optic cable installation. AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-027 passed.

D. *Certificate of Appropriateness – HARB – 33 W. Walnut Street* to construct a seven-story mixed-use building. The building's first-floor will contain commercial, retail, restaurant, and/or personal service spaces and the upper floors will house 107 dwelling units.

President Leon asked Solicitor Steward to address related legal questions. Attorney Steward reminded that the state Municipal Historic Districts Law and the HARB-related ordinance require Council to only consider exterior architectural and related features. Council shall not consider matters not pertinent to the historic aspect and nature of the district. She emphasized that the height of the building shall not be considered when considering approval of a COA. Solicitor Steward also addressed Mr. Romeril's contention that a quorum was not present when this COA was recommended for approval. She stated that HARB is a recommending body. She added that until someone new is appointed to fill an expired term, that member can continue to serve and did so. Both circumstances allow this matter to be considered by Council tonight.

Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins said the average height of the highest side of the proposed building is 86 feet. The maximum allowed in this zoning district is 150 feet. Mayor Reynolds added that the planned top floor will be set back in order to minimize the height appearance.

Mr. Callahan said he will continue to oppose this project. He likes the building's appearance but does not believe the City should be selling land within the Historic District.

Ms. Kwiatek asked whether Council views on selling this land could be considered by voting Council members. Solicitor Steward said only architectural features shall be considered when voting.

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek; AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Leon, 5; NAY: Callahan, 1. Resolution 2026-028 passed.

E. Certificate of Appropriateness - 72 E. Market Street to construct a stone fireplace surround with a gas fireplace insert and construct a pergola to be painted a color to match the trim color of the main residence.

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek; AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-029 passed.

F. Certificate of Appropriateness - 400 Main Street to replace existing slate shingles with new slate shingles, replace existing copper gutters and downspouts in-kind, replace existing snow guards in-kind, replace four "eyebrow" flat roof sections with new metal roofing, and replace horizontal wood siding in-kind at the base of the Belfry.

Sponsors: Amann, Kwiatek; AYE: Colón, Daniels, Kwiatek, Amann, Callahan, Leon, 6. Resolution 2026-030 passed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 8:56 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk