

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, October 7, 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, Hillary G. Kwiatek, Colleen Laird, Rachel Leon, Kiera Wilhelm, and Michael G. Colón, 6; Absent was Grace Crampsie Smith, 1. (Ms. Laird arrived at 7:02 PM.)

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 16, 2025

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Tighter Security Needed

Resident Arthur Curatola again commented on the September 10 shooting death of political activist Charlie Kirk in Utah and spoke in support of adding tighter security at public gatherings including providing metal detectors at events such as festivals and political speeches.

Two Years of Genocide

Resident Harry Faber noted that today marks two years since the most broadcasted and live-streamed genocide began in Gaza. He lamented that City Council has not passed a Resolution denouncing the genocide. He contended that this is not just a foreign policy issue at the federal government because City residents' tax dollars are involved. He also urged that the City divest the City's funds from companies that profit from the oppression.

Thanks to Public Works

Resident Jan Beatty offered her appreciation to Public Works for being attentive and professional in assisting with her problem.

Upcoming Climate Action Plan Update

Resident Lynn Rothman, chairwoman of Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), announced that an update to the Climate Action Plan will be presented at 9AM on November 20 at City Hall. She also announced that she will be stepping down from the EAC, creating an

opening. She encouraged residents to submit a letter of interest. She noted that Easton and Allentown have followed suit in creating Climate Action Plans.

Support for Fired Employee

Mary Tomlinson of Allentown said she was present on behalf of End Mass Incarceration – Power Lehigh Valley in support of Lehigh County Commissioner and former City employee Zach Cole Borghi. Mr. Borghi was arrested August 28 following a grand jury investigation into an interstate drug ring. She said the City failed Mr. Borghi by firing him as its Open Records Officer without considering him innocent until proven guilty.

Also Supports Ex-Employee

Sharon Finnegan of Allentown also spoke on behalf of Mr. Borghi and criticized two Council members for going on record for calling the situation of the arrest distressing and disheartening while insinuating further involvement. The City did not comment but stated that Mr. Borghi was no longer employed by the City. She noted that Lehigh County Commissioners did not immediately presume his guilt and allowed him the dignity and respect to make a statement. He remains on the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Finnegan said he is known and respected in the community and has been a public advocate for years. The situation appears to her to be racist and politically partisan.

Keep Bethlehem Special

Resident Mike Stauffer said his observation of increased traffic in Bethlehem got him to thinking about the overwhelming increase in development. He urged the City to find a way to slow development to maintain the quality of life that makes Bethlehem special.

App Would Help Customers

Resident Mark Will-Weber said there are several comments about increased City water bills on the Complainers of Bethlehem website. Mr. Will-Weber said, as he has contended in the past, that unnecessarily-high water bills caused by leaks or failing toilet flappers could be avoided if the City would offer an app such as AquaHawk. These apps can be checked by customers to determine unusually-high water usage part-way through the quarter. Once detected, repairs could be made sooner to minimize wasted water to keep down costs. He also contended that the money that the smart meters save the City in meter reading could be used to purchase the technology offered by AquaHawk or competitors.

Advertisements Questioned

Resident Sean Kernan reported finding several large stickers the first week of August that were advertising a business' events for August 8 and 9. These stickers were in the right-of-way pasted on the sidewalk and remained there on August 20, long past the activity dates. Those placing advertisements like these should be held accountable not to break laws. He wondered whether placement was lawful. If so, he believed timely removal should have occurred.

Speeding/Co-op/LERTA

Resident Mary Jo Makoul said that Salisbury Township police use Electronic Non Radar Device to monitor and enforce motor vehicle speed. She suggested that City police contact Salisbury police to learn details of the effectiveness of this device as a means to reduce speeding in Bethlehem. Ms. Makoul also asked whether Bethlehem is investigating problems involving the Bethlehem Co-op Market. This money should have been directed instead toward addressing homelessness. Ms. Makoul also would not favor offering the redevelopers of the former Martin Tower site a LERTA, Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance program. She pointed out that Bethlehem Area School District, as one of the affected taxing entities, rejected designating this as a LERTA district some years ago. Further, she said the majority partner in this project is a billionaire who does not deserve this tax break.

Police Salary Comparison

Resident William Scheirer said he has been told by a City police officer that the Department has 133 officers available for duty compared to a full compliment figure of 154. He was told that lower salaries were the key reason. Mr. Scheirer brought this up as budget hearings are approaching. He suggested surveying other departments' salary figures for comparison.

Loss of History

Resident Stephen Antalics recently drove on East Third Street and observed the "tragedy" as he viewed the "monstrosity" of the new ArtsQuest building. He lamented the loss many years ago of a fish market, a fruit distribution center, and small shops that made up the South Side's history. He said there is no solution. This history is gone. All that can be done is to learn this lesson and not make the same mistake with the North Side.

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

Northside Alive Concerns

Resident Bruce Haines raised concerns about the consulting contract for Northside Alive (agenda items 6 A and 10 A). This program was formed in 2017 to examine the blighted area north and east of the Central Business District including the Linden Street commercial buildings. He believes this district has been expanded and now includes the block from Main Street to Guetter Street. He said there was no need to include this section in the blighted area. He does not know when or why the change occurred. A problem has occurred because those recently added businesses voted to disband the Downtown Business Association board. This has divided the downtown. He asked for answers and who authorized expanding the boundaries.

Support World Heritage Efforts

Resident Jeffrey Parks commended the City for its continued support of the UNESCO World Heritage sites and the request to contribute \$150,000 toward the salary of the site

manager (agenda items 6 E, 8 A, and 10 E). He cited the benefits of tourism and cultural quality from investing in historic preservation and Musikfest. Similarly, he predicted that the support of the World Heritage sites designation will be of huge benefit.

Spending Questioned

Resident William Scheirer observed several agenda items that include monetary figures: \$40,000 for Northside Alive, \$12,000 for the Revolving Loan Fund, \$150,000 for the World Heritage site manager, and \$120,000 budget adjustment for downtown initiatives. He focused on the latter because he wondered what this is. Who gets the money and what is it for?

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan again asked for a list of funds the Parking Authority has provided to City-related organizations.

Director of Community and Economic Development Laura Collins had the list that has been prepared. She read some highlights which include \$95,000 to the Bethlehem Economic Development Corp. (BEDCO) for the South Side Arts District, \$100,000 to the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, \$100,000 to the South Side Ambassadors Program as well as various one-time projects including payments for Fairview Park and street lights on Main Street. The list will be sent to Council.

Ms. Laird

Ms. Laird followed up on a resident's question about funding for the food co-op. She also has seen some online posts questioning whether funds are being used appropriately. Ms. Laird asked Ms. Collins to explain how the funding works and what checks and balances are in place.

Ms. Collins said that the grant involved is from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under Community Project Funding. This money was awarded in 2021. The City was a pass-through agency. The plan had to be approved by HUD, and expenditures made by the co-op must fall within the categories of eligible expenses. The City Controller also reviews expenses for approval.

Ms. Laird also asked whether this funding could have been used for other purposes including to assist the homeless.

Ms. Collins said no. Awards are made to specific applicants for specific purposes. They cannot be reallocated.

Ms. Leon

Ms. Leon asked Police Chief Michelle Kott how many police officers the City employs.

Chief Kott said the authorized full complement is 154. There are now 14 vacancies. Additional officers are out of service on long-term injury or away on military leave. She estimated the total available officers to be in the high 130s.

Ms. Leon also asked for confirmation that police officers' pay is set by collective bargaining.

Chief Kott said that was correct. The City has a contract through 2026.

Business Administrator Eric Evans said that the area departments tend to leapfrog each other in salary as new contracts are negotiated. Easton negotiated a new contract this year and is higher. He expected that Bethlehem's eventual negotiated figures will take that into account.

Ms. Leon asked whether results have been positive after Bethlehem offered signing bonuses, education opportunities and more to attract applicants.

Chief Kott said there has been some success but there is still difficulty nationally.

Mr. Callahan

Mr. Callahan asked whether many officers have left the City in favor of a higher-paying department.

The Chief said a few, but not many.

Mr. Callahan also observed that Mayor J. William Reynolds has not been present at many Council meetings of late.

Mr. Evans said he has many competing events.

Mr. Colón

Mr. Colón acknowledged that Ms. Rothman will be stepping down as chair of the EAC. He thanked her for her contributions. He encouraged Council members to put forward those who might be willing to serve the Commission and reminded that Council in the new year must appoint the next chair.

Mr. Colón also noted that police salaries are outside the purview of Council.

Mr. Colón also asked Mr. Evans whether the lack of budgets on both the state and federal levels have impacted City operations through a disruption in funding or otherwise.

Mr. Evans said he is not aware of any yet.

Ms. Laird

Ms. Laird asked about the advertisements that have been found on sidewalks. What can be done?

Public Works Director Michael Alkhal said residents can report these concerns. The legality can be determined on a case-by-case basis. Circumstances vary. Signs on City property, such as poles, are removed when workers have time. He would need more details and research to make a determination on the signs mentioned during Public Comment. In instances in which the advertisements are repeated and not legal, citations have been issued in the past.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. *Director of Community and Economic Development and Deputy Director of Community Development – Memo – 2025 44 Northside Alive Plan Elm Street – WRT, LLC*

The Clerk read a September 25, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Laura Collins, Director of the Department of Community and Economic Development, and Sara Satullo, Deputy Director of Community Development. The two seek authorization to execute an Agreement with WRT, LLC of Philadelphia to lead the development to update the Northside Alive Plan. The cost is \$39,960, and completion is expected by September 30, 2026. There are no renewals. WRT developed the original Northside2027 Plan and was determined to be the most cost-efficient option among three quotes.

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

B. *Business Administrator – Memo – 2025 Pension Minimum Municipal Obligations (MMO) – Pension State Aid*

The Clerk read a September 26, 2025 memorandum from Business Administrator Eric Evans advising that a direct deposit for Pension State Aid in the amount of \$5,139,230.78 has been allocated to Pension Bond Payments and Police, Fire and Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS) Minimum Municipal Obligations. The breakdown is as follows: \$1,545,056.89 for Police, \$1,545,056.89 for Fire, and \$2,049,117.00 for the PMRS.

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

C. *City Solicitor – Use Permit Agreement – PA Running Company – 2025 Bethlehem Running Festival*

The Clerk read an October 1, 2025 memorandum from Solicitor John F. Spirk, Jr. with an attached Use Permit Agreement and a Resolution. The Permittee is the Pennsylvania Running Company and the sub-Permittee is ArtsQuest. The event is the 2025 Running Festival. Events will be held from 5:30 to 6:30 PM on October 17, 7:30 to 8:30 AM on October 18, and 9 to 10:45 AM on October 18. The premises will include specified locations in Monocacy Park, Payrow Plaza, and Westside Park as well as East 1st Street from Polk Street to the eastern terminus, and Founders Way between 1st and 2nd Streets.

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

- D. *Director of Community and Economic Development – Memo – 2025 46 Revolving Loan Fund Development – The Center for Public Enterprise*

The Clerk read an October 1, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from Laura Collins, Director of the Department of Community and Economic Development, and Sara Satullo, Deputy Director of Community Development. The two recommended an Agreement with The Center for Public Enterprise of New York to assist Bethlehem in the design and implementation of a mixed-income development program known as the Revolving Loan Fund. The cost is \$12,000, and completion is expected by December 31, 2026. There are no renewals.

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

- E. *World Heritage Coordinator – 2025 47 Moravian World Heritage Site Manager – Moravian University*

The Clerk read an October 1, 2025 memorandum and proposed Resolution from World Heritage Coordinator Stephanie Augello. Ms. Augello recommends an Agreement with Moravian University to assist in funding the position of World Heritage site manager. The cost is \$150,000. There are no renewals.

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

- F. *Director of Planning and Zoning – Memo – Capital Improvement Plan 2026-2030*

The Clerk read a September 30, 2025 memorandum from Cathy Fletcher, Director of Planning and Zoning, with the attached the 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Program. At its September 11, 2025 meeting, the City Planning Commission unanimously voted to recommend approval of the plan.

President Colón said this matter will be referred to the Committee of the Whole for review at its October 21 meeting at 6 PM in Town Hall.

7. REPORTS

- A. *President of Council*

President Colón stated that Council's Committee of the Whole met earlier this evening to discuss proposed amendments to Article 112 – Campaign Finance Reports. The Committee unanimously voted to send the amendments to full Council for consideration. The matter will appear on a future City Council meeting agenda.

- B. *Mayor*

Mr. Evans said he had no report to provide.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

8 A. *Bill No. 42-2025 – World Heritage Coordinator – Budget Adjustment Ordinance – General Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 42-2025 – World Heritage Coordinator – Budget Adjustment Ordinance – General Fund, sponsored by Ms. Wilhelm and Ms. Leon, and titled:

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

Ms. Kwiatek emphasized that this is a second reading. She referenced the question raised by a resident under Public Comment. She explained that this is related to the World Heritage site manager position, which will be partially funded by moving funds from the Downtown Initiatives fund into the City's Cash Balance to cover the cost.

Ms. Laird said that, identical to First reading, she will recuse herself from this vote because she is employed by Moravian University. (A signed Conflict of Interest Form is attached to the original set of minutes.)

Voting AYE: Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 5, ABSTENTION: Ms. Laird, 1. Bill No. 42-2025, now known as Ordinance 2025-40, passed on Final Reading.

8 B. *Bill No. 43-2025 – Women's Health Services and Immunization Outreach – Budget Adjustment Ordinance – General Fund*

The Clerk read Bill No. 43-2025 – Women's Health Services and Immunization Outreach – Budget Adjustment Ordinance – General Fund, sponsored by Ms. Wilhelm and Ms. Leon, and titled:

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

Voting AYE: Ms. Laird, Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 6. Bill No. 43-2025, now known as Ordinance 2025-41, passed on Final Reading.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

A. *Approve Resolution – 2025 44 Northside Alive Plan Elm Street – WRT, LLC*

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-154 that authorized to execute an Agreement with the WRT, LLC to lead the development of the updated Northside Plan.

Mr. Callahan asked about the boundaries of the Northside Alive plan and whether blocks were added to the original plan.

Ms. Collins said this notion was incorrect. The initial boundaries have remained the same. One boundary always has extended down Broad Street to Main Street. Ms. Collins supported this statement stating that she has a copy of the original 2017 plan.

Ms. Laird said she chaired the Economic Vitality Committee in 2017 and recalled that there were businesses on the north side of Broad Street that were part of the participants, suggesting the broader initial boundary contention.

Ms. Collins added that some businesses outside the boundaries have participated and are welcome to do so. The goal is to improve the quality of life in the corridor. It is not intended to compete with the downtown. They are compatible.

President Colón noted that Northside Alive is funded by HUD to prevent or alleviate blight. He believed approval to participate must have been run through Council and assumed that change to any boundaries also would have to be approved by Council.

Ms. Collins believed those to be correct statements. A reauthorization of an updated plan, as is the subject of this agenda item, would have to be approved by Council including a map of the designated boundaries.

Ms. Laird next turned to the Resolution at hand. She believed that several public meetings and neighborhood walks must be held before the amended plan is approved.

Ms. Collins confirmed the assumption.

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

B. Approve Resolution – Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) – Allocations-2025 Pension State Aid

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-155 that authorized to allocate \$5,139,230.78 in 2025 General Municipal Pension System State Aid to the line items specified in the Resolution.

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

C. Approve Use Permit Agreement – PA Running Company – 2025 Bethlehem Running Festival

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-156 that authorized to execute a Use Permit Agreement with Pennsylvania Running Company for the 2025 Bethlehem Running Festival.

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

D. Approve Resolution – 2025 46 Revolving Loan Fund Development – The Center for Public Enterprise

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-157 that authorized to execute an Agreement with The Center for Public Enterprise to help in the design and implementation of a mixed-income development Revolving Loan Fund program.

Ms. Kwiatek asked for some information about this program and how it would work.

Ms. Collins said this was one of the strategies outlined in Opening Doors. A lot of housing projects face financial challenges. This program ensures affordability components. The Center for Public Enterprise has worked closely with other communities that are considered models for this program. There are specific requirements for builders to participate including the stipulation that at least 30 percent of the units must be priced at the “affordable” level.

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

E. Approve Resolution – 2025 47 Moravian World Heritage Site Manager – Moravian University

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-158 that authorized to execute an Agreement with Moravian University to assist in funding the World Heritage Site Manager position.

Voting AYE: Ms. Leon, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Kwiatek, and Mr. Colón, 5; ABSTENTION: Ms. Laird, 1. The Resolution passed.

F. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 306 South New Street

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-159 that authorized to install two new wall signs on the main façades and various new signage in the storefront windows and doors.

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

G. Certificate of Appropriateness – HCC – 13-15 East Third Street

Ms. Leon and Mr. Colón sponsored Resolution No. 2025-160 that authorized to clean and restore the brick façade and terra-cotta details; paint metal panel arch window insets, trim

and fascia “barely brown” in color; and paint window trim, wood trim, all flashing, fascia and accents “deep forest” (green) in color.

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

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 8:50 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk