

BETHLEHEM CITY COUNCIL MEETING
10 East Church Street - Town Hall
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, June 16, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Vice President Laird announced that a quorum of Council was not present. She intended to conduct a modified meeting so that those who wished to speak could be heard; however, no motions, votes or deliberations would occur in accordance with the Sunshine Act. Reports would be received but matters that could not be dealt with this evening would be moved to an upcoming agenda.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Colleen Laird. Present were Bryan G. Callahan, Hillary G. Kwiatek, and Ms. Laird, 3; Absent were Justin Amann, Michael G. Colón, Jo Daniels, and Rachel Leon, 4.

CITATIONS: Police Capt. Nicholas Lechman; Police Sgt. John Casella

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Laird said there were questions after the June 2 Council meeting about permissible speech during Public Comment. She asked Council Solicitor Stephanie Steward to address this matter.

Solicitor Steward said that Council's Public Comment rules are intentionally broad to give the public an opportunity to offer comments on City business, community concerns, public policy, elected officials and government actions. This broad protection also may mean that speakers may say things that others may find offensive, hurtful, demeaning or wrong. The first amendment protects a wide range of speech. Unless speech constitutes elements including a true threat, face-to-face insults or defamation, it is protected. The City has Constitutional obligations to allow free speech. Doing so does not necessarily mean agreement with or approval of the speaker's message. Bethlehem City Council has an additional rule prohibiting name-calling and personal attacks. This may seem contrary, but both must be adhered to.

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

Arthur Curatola

Mr. Curatola encouraged all to do something about the genocide being carried out by the leaders of Israel.

Scott Moser

Mr. Moser handed out information about “deficiencies that appear to be at the Walnut Street Parking Garage with the fire protections system” and said the next speaker would explain.

Burt Mucklin

Mr. Mucklin said the garage authorized by the Bethlehem Parking Authority was a bid-spec job, meaning that all contractors were to follow the specifications outlined in the bidding process. It appears that the specifications were not completely followed, at least with respect to the fire protection system. He noted that the pipe and pressure gauges, in particular, were not provided as specified. He estimated that the difference in materials and labor was \$205,100. He requested that a third-party engineer review the work to see what was not done by the general contractor according to the specifications. He said the City taxpayers and Bethlehem Parking Authority did not get what they paid for.

Geza Burkit, Jr.

Mr. Burkit offered a photo of conditions at 449 Carlton Avenue and said the landlord should be held responsible for cleaning it up. He additionally raised health concerns about a proposed landfill expansion near the St. Luke’s Anderson Campus and about data centers.

William Scheirer

Mr. Scheirer continued his comments from the June 2 meeting. He said that the recycling fee is really a tax on property. If he has no recyclables for disposal, he is charged the same fee anyway. This comes about because he owns property. Water and sewer fees, he agreed, are user fees; however, other parts of the bill are basically a connection fee or a tax.

Alex Miller

Mr. Miller again urged the City not to renew its contract with Flock Safety for license plate readers. He encouraged the public to educate themselves on alleged abuses this company and similar companies have committed with obtained data.

Stephen Antalics

Mr. Antalics observed that many South Side streets between June 1 and September 1 will have ample on-street parking because Lehigh University is on summer break. This is a reminder of the concentration of student housing and what it does to these neighborhoods during the school year. He urged Council to revise its definition of “family”. He cited other college towns that have been successful in limiting student housing by setting a maximum of two students per household, which minimizes the profit incentive. Bethlehem should take similar measures to try to restore more traditional family ownership.

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

Ms. Laird said this portion of the agenda is generally reserved for public comment on matters to be voted on during this meeting, but there will be no comments taken since there will be no matters deliberated or voted on this evening. She repeated that items that were on the agenda for this evening will be considered during the July 7 meeting. She apologized for any inconvenience.

While Council cannot deliberate on matters discussed this evening, she offered Council members up to 5 minutes to comment on matters the public raised tonight. Because of the Sunshine Act, the comments should be limited to announcements, general statements, and general remarks.

Mr. Callahan referred to an email sent to Council earlier in the day from Steven Fernstrom in which the executive director of the Parking Authority offered to meet with Council members who may have concerns about the parking garage or operations. They also were invited to attend Authority meetings.

Mr. Callahan said he has approached Mr. Fernstrom in the past with questions about the bidding and construction process but has generally met with resistance. He has asked for a Community Development Committee meeting to review the circumstances but, so far, none has been scheduled. He said he would have the City Clerk send a memo to formally request that a meeting be held on this subject.

Ms. Laird reminded that the Parking Authority is an independent legal entity with its own authority involving contracts. City Council does not review these contracts or sign them. Council's interaction with the Authority is limited in scope.

4. OLD BUSINESS

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

None.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

7. REPORTS

- A. *President of Council*

None.

B. Mayor

Mayor J. William Reynolds reported that block parties have been scheduled to gain input on upgrades to Madison, Clearview and Bernie Fritz Parks on three consecutive Wednesdays. The next Complete Streets meeting will be on Thursday.

C. Committee Chairs

Ms. Kwiatek announced that the Community Development Committee will hold its annual Financial Accountability Incentive Reporting (FAIR) Hearing at 6 PM on July 7 in Town Hall.

8. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

None.

9. NEW ORDINANCES

None.

10. RESOLUTIONS

None.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 7:59 PM.

ATTEST:

Tad J. Miller
City Clerk