

**BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025**

MEMBERS PRESENT John Merhottein, President
John Gallagher, Vice President
Matthew Deckman, Commissioner
Michael Hudak, Commissioner
DeAnn Lawrence, Commissioner

OTHERS PRESENT James L. Broughal, Township Solicitor
Doug Bruce, Township Manager
Samantha Smith, Community Development Director
Ronald J. Gawlik, Township Engineer

CALL TO ORDER Mr. Merhottein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENT Mr. Merhottein announced with a heavy heart the passing of Fire Fighter Mike Forstoffer. He was a member of Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company for 45 years. Mr. Merhottein first met him at the Community Days committee. He was instrumental in the food and drink service. Mr. Merhottein extended condolences to Fire Fighter Forstoffer's family and friends on behalf of the Board and staff.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR There were no comments during Courtesy of the Floor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES Upon motion (Deckman-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the September 15, 2025, regular public meeting minutes as amended.

SUBDIVISIONS & LAND DEVELOPMENT

MOTION **A MOTION APPROVING IMPROVEMENTS SECURITY RELEASE #2 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$340,570.13 FOR FALMER DRIVE APARTMENTS**

Mr. Merhottein said this is a standard security release.

Upon motion (Lawrence-Hudak), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote approving Improvements Security Release #2 in the amount of \$340,570.13 for Falmer Drive Apartments.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION R058-25 **A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATIONS TO THE LOCAL SHARE ACCOUNT (NORTHAMPTON/LEHIGH COUNTIES & MONROE COUNTY) GRANT PROGRAM OF THE COMMONWEALTH FINANCING AUTHORITY**

Mr. Merhottein said they requesting a total of \$968,445.89 and listed the item:

09-15-2025

- 18 radios for the Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company (\$276,352.29);
- Two police patrol vehicles (\$168,810.62);
- 10 radios for the Nancy Run Fire Company (\$114,440);
- 60 sets of rescue/wildlands gear for the Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company (\$99,000);
- LifePak 35 Cardiac Monitor for Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company Emergency Medical Services (\$63,556.75);
- Ambulance remount for Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company Emergency Medical Services (\$258,746.15);
- Firefighter rehabilitation equipment for Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company Emergency Medical Services (\$25,103.08);
- Stair chairs for Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company Emergency Medical Services (\$22,437).

Mr. Bruce said the township had received approximately \$400,000 in grants in each of the last two years from this source. He said the board had focused on public safety grants from this source. Last year's requests were more than \$800,000 and this year's are more than \$1 million; the board may have to consider limiting the requests moving forward, Mr. Bruce said. Mr. Deckman asked if the items are contingent on receiving the grant. Mr. Bruce said some of the urgently needed items are purchased even without grant support. Mr. Gallagher asked if the list was prioritized. Mr. Bruce said it was not.

Upon motion (Deckman-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve Resolution R058-25 authorizing applications to the Local Share Account (Northampton/Lehigh Counties & Monroe County) Grant Program of the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

RESOLUTION R059-25 A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE ACT 537 SEWAGE FACILITIES PLAN UPDATE TO EVALUATE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE SHERIDAN DRIVE PUMP STATION SERVICE AREA WITHIN PALMER TOWNSHIP

Mr. Bruce said this was requested by Palmer Township and the Bethlehem Township Municipal Authority to the township's Act 537 sewage plan because Palmer Township is taking a pump station off line and moving that sewage through the township's conveyance lines. Mr. Gallagher added that the BTMA assured them that they have the capacity and infrastructure to handle Palmer's waste.

Upon motion (Hudak-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve Resolution R059-25 adopting the Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan Update to evaluate sewage management within the Sheridan Drive Pump Station service area within Palmer Township

RESOLUTION R060-25 A RESOLUTION CONFIRMING CERTAIN FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS RELATED TO A REDEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE CAPITAL PROGRAM (RACP) GRANT FOR THE JOHNSTON MANSION INTERIOR RENOVATION PROJECT

Mr. Bruce said the township received a \$1 million state grant from the Office of the Budget RACP Program for the Johnston Mansion Interior Project. Staff met recently with the state consultant who recommended this resolution, which calls for several financial commitments by the township:

1. Placing the project in the 2026 capital budget for \$2.2 million total \$1 million from the RACP Grant, \$1 million from the Housenick Memorial Foundation, and the remainder of the cost coming from either the township's Parks and Recreation Fund or the General Fund.
2. Also confirming that the township will provide interim funding for this project prior to grant reimbursements becoming available.

The state consultant reviewed and approved this resolution as what is needed to move the grant along. Mr. Merhottein said he had no issue with this resolution as is. Mr. Bruce said the township solicitor also reviewed this resolution. Mr. Gallagher would like to see the parks and recreation money used for parks and recreation only. Mr. Hudak disagreed. Mr. Merhottein said a decision as to where to draw the money didn't need to be made tonight. Mr. Gallagher said it was part of the resolution. Solicitor Broughal said it didn't matter which township account it comes from.

Upon motion (Deckman-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve Resolution R060-25 confirming certain financial commitments related to a Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) Grant for the Johnston Mansion Interior Renovation Project, as amended (adding the general fund as a potential source in Section 1).

MOTIONS OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MOTION

A MOTION AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE GRANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE JANET JOHNSTON HOUSENICK AND WILLIAM D. HOUSENICK MEMORIAL FOUNDATION AND THE TOWNSHIP OF BETHLEHEM TO SUPPORT THE INTERIOR RENOVATION OF THE ARCHIBALD JOHNSTON MANSION AT THE HOUSENICK MEMORIAL PARK

Mr. Merhottein said this increases the foundation's contribution to the project from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. Mr. Hudak thanked the Housenick Trust for doing this.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Hudak), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote authorizing and approving the First Amendment to the grant agreement between the Janet Johnston Housenick and William D. Housenick Memorial Foundation and the Township of Bethlehem to support the interior renovation of the Archibald Johnston Mansion at the Housenick Memorial Park

MOTION

A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A RADIO USE AGREEMENT WITH NANCY RUN FIRE COMPANY

Mr. Merhottein said this agreement is required by the state for grant reimbursement.

Upon motion (Lawrence-Deckman), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote authorizing the township manager to enter into a radio use agreement with Nancy Run Fire Company.

MOTION

A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A RADIO USE AGREEMENT WITH BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

Mr. Merhottein said this agreement is the same as the previous one.

Upon motion (Deckman-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote authorizing the township manager to enter into a radio use agreement with Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company.

Upon motion (Hudak-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the bill agenda of September 10, 2025.

**BILL AGENDA
OF SEPTEMBER 10,
2025**

PURCHASE ORDERS

PO20251858 – DEGLER-WHITING, INC. –BTCC – \$4,459.00
PO 20251902 – STAR BUICK – GMC – PUBLIC WORKS – \$2,951.46
PO 20251911 – PROPOWER MFG. INC. – PUBLIC WORKS – \$5,230.00

Upon motion (Deckman-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners voted by voice vote to approve purchase orders as presented.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Hudak), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the treasurer's report of August 31, 2025, subject to audit.

**TREASURER'S
REPORT OF
AUGUST 31, 2025**

The following appeal is on the agenda:

**ZONING HEARING
BOARD MEETING OF
SEPTEMBER 24, 2025**

Appeal #16-2025 of Garet Conrad seeks relief concerning real estate located at 3006 Willow Court, Bethlehem Township, Northampton County. The applicant is seeking to construct an elevated deck greater than four feet above average grade which is required by Bethlehem Township Zoning Ordinance Section 275-190.D(5)(e) to meet setback criteria for a principal structure. The relief requested is a dimensional variance from Bethlehem Township Zoning Ordinance Section 275-49.G(1), which requires a minimum rear yard setback for a principal structure of 35 feet. The applicant requests a 20.01-foot rear yard setback, thereby seeking a variance of 15.01 feet. The real estate is located in the Medium Density Residential (MDR) District.

Upon motion (Hudak-Deckman), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote directing the solicitor to attend the meeting and oppose Appeal #16-2025.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Gallagher asked why the citizen police academy budget increased by \$20,000. He asked if they received a grant. Mr. Bruce said he was unsure but would get an answer to him. Mr. Gallagher commented on the community development report. He asked why there was an approximate number in the complaints backlog. He said the department should know for certain how many complaints are still waiting to be addressed. Mr. Hudak said the initial complaint process takes 30 days. All monthly reports were accepted.

There being no further business, Mr. Merhottein adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,

Laura G. Zapata
Recording Secretary