



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Invocation:

Pledge to the Flag

Roll Call

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that can he say this before they were going to start the official meeting, Council is going to give a Proclamation to Mary Griffin.

Ms. Mary Griffin thanked everyone for this award. It is absolutely wonderful after 28 years plus in doing this business. She thanked everyone so much and stated that she is really honored.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated to Ms. Griffith that some folks Council will make comments about your Proclamation. She stated to Ms. Griffith you are still in the spotlight.

Ms. Candida Affa stated to Ms. Griffith that she is certainly the angel in Allentown. She remembers at least 15 years ago, walking into her place and was so impressed. She stated that she showed her everything. The food bank, the instruments that kids can learn there that were donated. She volunteered to help teach, but said nothing over fifth grade stating that is as far as she can tutor. She stated that she was so impressed and Ms. Griffith hung in there so many times needing food, needing money and basically doing it yourself. She stated that her hard work and truly being an angel for these children. She stated that she has so much respect for her and stated that she loves her.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that she would like to tell her that she was a single mom 17 years ago and she helped her tremendously with her daughter. She stated for that she will always thank her. She stated that her daughter is now 20 something years or age. She would go to the Caring Place after school and will bring her daughter to her. She is grown and doing well and thanked her for all that she does and all that she did for her and all the great things you do for the community.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that they go way back and he knows that she comes from good stock. He is not surprised. He stated that she is the example of what everyone should be stating that she is a true human being. He thanked Ms. Griffith for what she does. He stated that she deserves every bit of that Proclamation.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated well deserved.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that this is awesome because when she first moved to Allentown in 2008 or so, Ms. Griffith was one of the first organizations that she found. She was right beside the Obama office. She stated that she wondered in. The last line of that Proclamation is one of the most important things that as cities continue to grow and develop and blocks change that they hold true and the people who made Allentown. The people who have been committed to the community long before tall buildings have come to Allentown. She stated to Ms. Griffith, you are that person. Similar to Dr. Mota, she stated that a couple of years ago, if it wasn't for Ms. Griffith's food bank outside her mom went because they needed to go. With inflation, they might be back. She stated thank you for that food bank and thank you for having it assessible. It is right there on the street at least in warm weather. It is right there on the street for people to take what they need. She looks forward to continuing for 100 or 500 more years walking by. She stated maybe not you, but who ever you pass it down to knowing that is an asset to the community as they develop that block.

Ms. Cynthia Mota thanked Ms. Griffith for all that she does.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated to Ms. Griffith that she doesn't know if she remembers back she used to intern at the Caring Place for a very short time because she started right before Covid and she was interning as helping the children after school homework and during the very short time she was there, she learned so much as had such a great connection with those kids and it is such an amazing thing that you are doing at the Caring Place. Please continue doing God's given work. Thank you.

Present: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Courtesy of the Floor

Courtesy and Privilege of the Floor Rules

Mr. Gregory Shamp, 335 N. 8th Street, stated that he came here a year ago asking for help from Council. He was handed over to Ms. Kistler from Code. They met in city hall with her assistant and they accused him of all these things, he had to hire an attorney and go to the Magistrate Santiago. There was abuse by Mr. Keppel who he met last week to get these things resolved. They said that he received citations on his building on Chew

Street. He never received them. He called the FBI, the Department of Justice, he is going to call the Police Chief and if he has to take a lie detector test, he will. He never received the notices.

Mr. Aaron Gorodzinsky, Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley, stated that the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley is the umbrella organization that represents over 8,000 Jewish community members and support agencies and synagogues, including the Jewish Community Center and Jewish Family Services. Since October 7th, the Jewish Community has been feeling concerned, nervous, isolated, and hurt particularly in the light of the surge of Anti-Semitism and hate speech that has been directed towards the Jewish community and anybody who has show-cased support for Israel. Even in the Lehigh Valley, the rise of Anti-Semitism in targeting of the Jewish community is at an all-time high. The Jewish community has been targeted by multiple bomb threats in the city of Allentown. Two of the synagogues were targeted during funeral and religious services and at least one, the Jewish Community Center during the Jewish New Year which is the holiest of celebrations for the Jewish community. He stated that being a practicing Jew in the city of Allentown and attending religious services in our city has now become an issue where security is to be considered. As a result, their community has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to ensure that our facilities in the city of Allentown are safe. They have applied for a security grant at the state and federal level. They have hired a full-time security advisor to engage every single organization and conduct threat, liability and risk assessments to strengthen the physical security of our buildings and help our community have an integrated security plan in case of an emergency. There is no one community prayer service that occurs in the Jewish community that doesn't require having armed security to ensure the safety of their community. This is not normal and it should not be normal. He thanked Chief Roca who has literally been a rock for the community and the Allentown Police Department and the Fire Department who have responded to multiple incidents in their Jewish facilities. He thanked the local FBI team and the city police for all the work they are doing to keep the community safe. It would be incredibly hurtful to the community that the one Resolution that gets passed is against the Jewish community who is very much active in this community. They ask on behalf of the community, the city does not give to the pressure and open the door to pass any resolutions that have very little to do with the functioning of the city, but it will very much damage the citizens of the city of Allentown.

Ms. Kathryn Hoffman, 1649 W. Linden Street, stated that she lived there 1987 and decries all murders of civilians no matter what nationality they are. She decried the October 7th murders and the almost 30,000 women, children, and old people that are being killed in Gaza right now as they

speak. She always comes down on the side of peace and negotiations. That is what she wants to happen now in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. She understands the gentleman's concerns, but it is also anti-Muslim and violence that is happening in the country. The point he left out which is very essential is that in all those world conflicts none of them except for Israel's attack on Gaza is funded and enabled by our tax dollars.

Mr. Drew Swedberg, Film Manager of the Civic Theatre of Allentown, 527 N. 19th Street, representative of Lehigh Valley Artist Alliance and as a Signatory of Lehigh Valley Artists for a free Palestine, stated a letter signed by over 100 artists and local community members who are joining global calls for a cease fire as well as a local cause for this Council to immediately put the Cease Fire Resolution on the agenda. While the mayor and this body governance remains silent, a US backed genocide funded by an estimated \$1,653,519.00 of federal taxes of Allentown takes place in Palestine. As the city sends their police in riot gear to intimidate constituents who are mourning and organizing for Palestinians. He stated that they see clearly that this is a local issue and that their own struggle for liberation from militarized police force and surveillance in Allentown is deeply interconnected with Palestine as the horrific bombardment of five million Palestinians intensifies as they speak are resolve to ensure the city puts a cease fire on the agenda sharpens and as the Pennsylvania Reps recklessly push through a \$95.3 billion bill for war with \$14 billion to arm Israel. Their commitment to see a free Palestine in their lifetime remains steadfast. He read from their letter.

Ms. Jacque Irizarny, Saint Elmo Street, stated she is an artist in the Lehigh Valley known as Happenstance. She stated that her art is an extension of herself and it reflects peace, community, activism and truth. She often hears that she is so brave on what she does. They thank her for everything she does or don't even bother trying. It is a waste of your time, but she hardly ever hear how can they help her change the world. Much like her art, they are an extension of them and now you should represent or should represent peace, strength, courage, empathy, solidarity, and truth. She stated here is how you can help your people. You can be a symbol of change and do what's right for humanity and call for a cease fire. Every day they sit idol, indiscriminate bombs are being dropped on Gaza and more innocent people are dying. As of today, nearly 30,000 people have been killed. Many of whom are women and children. She stated that their hearts are shattered by this. Your hearts should be shattered by this. She stated that we must advocate for life, safety and basic rights for all people. It is unjust to think that the people of Gaza deserves anything less than all of us or we deserve more than they do. She stated that their grief does not only apply to Gaza, it extends to our every day citizens in the city that is also struggling with grief and the ability to survive here in our city. She asked

Council to work together for change. She asked to call for a cease fire and end this.

Ms. Josy Irizarny, Saint Elmo Street, asked Council to be on the right side of history and draft a resolution for a cease fire. The genocide funded by the US is being live-streamed and now elected officials are complicit in their silence. They cannot and will not turn our backs on the people of Gaza as they are being obliterated by the US bombs. Everyone should be doing everything they can to stop this massacre. As quoted from the Times of Israel yesterday Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich as he said that the return of hostages was not the most important thing for Israel further promoting the destruction and continuation of this massacre. Time is running out for Gaza and the hostages as Israel prepares their ground invasion and continued assault of Rafah where 1.4 million people are currently trapped.

Ms. An-Nisa Amatul, stated that in the last few months they have seen a genocide unfold in Gaza. They have reached over 28,000 deaths and over 12,000 being children. They are seeing no clean drinking water, no food besides animal feed and grass with a blockage of aid to come in. Individually have had surgeries performed without anesthesia. Has Gazans have been pushed to Rafah. They were told they would be safe and now being bombed. The Prime Minister has recently stated that the war would extend for another six to eight weeks. He also approved the access to Palestinians to Al - Masjid al - Aqsa which is a holy ground for the Muslims. She stated that they have seen the Israel state stating that they will not agree to another cease fire even as other nations have pulled their diplomats out and some severing ties entirely. President Biden promised aid to Israel in outrageous numbers while claiming to send humanitarian aid to Gaza, but does nothing to allow it to be let in. The deaths have doubled, if not tripled. The ones that are under the rubble. They are looking at over 28,000 deaths over 12,000 being children and if they are including the ones under the rubble, it is more than 30,000 to 35,000 Palestinians who died during the genocide. Those who are still living have no clean water. There are reports of people having to shave their heads so that they can be more sanitary because there is a risk of infection. They ask that a Cease Fire Resolution be introduced and passed and while it doesn't seem like local politics issue, this is where it starts. If anyone remembers history with the South African Apartheid gained its freedom by starting with local government. She stated as they elected them, they elected them to be their voices and that goes all of their voices, everyone sitting here. Allentown is known and she has been in the Lehigh Valley since was five years old. It is 20 years. Allentown is known for being very diverse and having Muslims, and Christians and Jews and everyone around it. It is a large Palestinian population, a large Syrian population and

a large African American population that all need to be represented. She stated that they ask for the city represent their people. It helps to listen to the voices. They are asking for a cease fire resolution that would help with humanitarian aid to Gaza and the release of hostages and political prisoners and reuniting families.

Mr. Logan Michael stated that he is from a smaller town outside the Lehigh Valley. He has lived in the Lehigh Valley his entire life. He is now an adult and he was not planning on coming tonight. He was not planning on speaking when he was on his way here. He was thinking to himself of what he experienced last night in the city of Bethlehem. It was his first time attending a public City Council meeting and listened to the stories of over 40 community members. His Palestinian, his Jewish, his Muslim community members, college students and others who spoke up to demand what they were feeling. He is here today to echo the call that the Allentown City Council draft and pass a cease fire resolution. In a town he comes from he remembers not too long ago. It was just a couple of years ago. The last time it was a social justice event in his town, where he is from for Black Lives Matter, specifically. There was a small group of students who came to his town to protest and give their voices and say what they felt needed to be said. They were met with violent hate. They were met with people waving confederate flags, showing hate symbols, screaming slurs. A child was spit on. That is what he has known, but ever since being active in Allentown for the last couple of weeks and in Bethlehem and Easton and this wonderful area. He stated that he is sure that they are aware. This is a wonderful city with some really great people in it. This city has shown him a new love in which that he did not know it existed and it has given him a new passion and that is the passion that has given him the ability to come up here tonight in front of all of you and all the amazing people speak. He echoed what his brothers and sisters tonight have said. Allentown and the region have shown him an incredible amount of love that he did not recognize existed.

Mr. Robert Wags, 202 N. 22nd Street, stated that the brutal atrocities on October 7th awakened many of the depravity of Hamas. The roofless terrorist organization controlling Gaza. More than 1,200 Israeli's were savagely murdered, babies were burned and decapitated, women were raped and 220 Israeli's and others were taken hostage. He does not recall many of this group coming and asking for a resolution at that point and condemning Hamas. This was the most brutal attack on Jews since the Holocaust. Many are unfamiliar with the problems in Gaza and this was intended to provide simple answers to a very complex issue. First, has Israel offered land in exchange for peace, yes. Many times. Each peace plan offered has been rejected. The Palestinian Authority urgently known as the PLO and neighboring Arab countries rejected nine attempts for a

peace process. Each time instead, turning to terrorism. The Palestinian Authority which governs the West Bank, the more moderate of the two areas that they are talking about and Hamas pay families of terrorists to murder innocent Israeli's. Palestinian Authorities president Mahmoud Abbas pays a success bonus and a monthly stipend in perpetuity to families of these terrorists. In 2018, Congress passed the Taylor Force Act which reduces economic aid to the Palestinian Authority until it ends this policy. A policy that continues today. How did the Israeli Defense Force respond. The IDF is more cautious about mitigating civilian casualties than any other military in modern times. Where was the call from this body to issue a resolution during all those events. What should a City Council be focused on? A City Council should be focused on a shooting of four people in the city of Allentown yesterday. The City Council should be focused on the items in this lengthy agenda. Foreign affairs issues should be taken up with our federal legislators. If they are not happy, there are elections coming up and they can voice with their vote.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated Carlos Marreno, 239 N. 4th Street. He stated no Carlos.

Ms. Naomi Fossa, 38 W. Union Boulevard - Bethlehem, thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. She stated that she lived in the Lehigh Valley for 11 years and worked in the city of Allentown for four. Those who are close to her know that her life is full of relationships with children. She is an older sister to five siblings, age six months to 17 years and works as a childcare provider. She spends a large amount of her time playing with children, making sure they are fed, that they can rest and ensuring that they both feel and are safe. She stated that she loves her work, but since October 7th, when spending time with her family or the families that she works with she is reminded what the IDF has been doing to the children of Gaza. Enabled by US tax dollars, the IDF has murdered over 12,000 children, injured 18,000, and orphaned 19,000. In addition to this, Israel has arrested and detained 880 minors just this year. Minors detained by the IDF are held without trial and in captivity. There are reports of sexual and physical abuse. Some children have passed away from cardiac arrest due to the extreme food insecurity, stress and trauma they are experiencing. Children passing away from cardiac arrest is not nature. When she interacts with the children in her life, she thinks of the children of Gaza and how each and every one of them is just as precious, curious, creative, playful and deserving of life as the children who live in the Lehigh Valley. As she works with children, she is disgusted to know her tax dollars from this work go towards destroying children's family, dreams and bodies overseas. Children do not have power in this world stating it is our responsibility to ensure that all children everywhere are not hungry, cold, or in danger when it is within our power. It is in the power of the US to ensure

this for the children of Gaza as we are funding the terror that they are experiencing. She stated that they might say that this is not a local issue, but she says because children in Allentown go to sleep hungry, cold, and afraid as well it is. She stated that if their compassion can't reach overseas, will it at least reach outside this hall, the city that you serve. All of the taxpayer money that goes to Israel's genocidal sadistic and purely evil actions should rather be invested into our communities. She asked Council to draft a cease fire resolution and tell the state of Pennsylvania to stop sending aid to Israel.

Ms. Gabriella Delgado, 121 S. Saint Cloud Street, stated that she has lived in Allentown for her entire life. Today, she is here to implore the members of the Allentown City Council to demand an immediate and permanent cease fire in Palestine. Over the past five months, the world has watched as atrocities have unfolded in Palestine at the hands of Israel. She stated that we have seen Israel to use bombs to turn, homes, schools, places of worship, and hospitals all to rubble. They have seen children, infants, mothers and fathers get their lives taken away from them and seen the sick and injured go without proper medical care due to the blockage of humanitarian aid getting into Palestine and because hospitals become a target for bombings has resulted in 30,000 Palestinians losing their lives and many more injured in only the past five months. She reminded everyone here today that despite Israel's attempts to highlight the events of October 7th and use it as a scapegoat for the crimes that they are committing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people has been going on for over 70 years. The Israeli aggression is being funded by America's tax dollars and today she demands that their tax dollars stop being used to fund a genocide and instead go back to our cities where it can be used to benefit the members of the community rather than to cause suffering. The suffering of the Palestinian people is inhumane and we as citizens of the United States have a moral obligation not to backdown into it is an immediate cease fire in place.

Mr. Jose A. Jimenez, 231 N. Railroad Street, stated he has lived in Allentown for over 30 years. He is also part of the immigrant community and proud that the City Council also reflects the immigrant community in Allentown. He is here in solidarity in calling for a cease fire for the genocide that is happening in Palestine. He stated that he is here because it is important for Council to listen to the immigrant community here in Allentown. A lot of immigrants like himself have been displaced from their home countries and this is a clear example of war, genocide happening across the world. He understands how they are saying that it is a local issue, look around. Allentown is made up of immigrants and of Palestinians. A lot of them did not want to come here in the first place. They were brought as children and he should not have to stand here and

explain his humanity of why he is here. He stated that he knows that they are also talking about federal tax dollars and what does that have to do with Allentown. He stated that they know that federal tax dollars make their way to the city for home repairs, education. He stated that they are talking about billions of dollars and a lot of people here think that it is going to a genocide. There are homeless people here. There are people that need repairs to the houses. Our schools are underfunded. How is it possible that we are spending money on something that is so immoral. They are against the deaths of everybody and hate crimes against the Jewish community, against immigrants, against everybody. He stated that he doesn't think that they are saying that anybody hates Jewish people. They are just saying that the state of Israel is committing a genocide in Palestine using our tax dollars. Invest it here, in Allentown.

Ms. Raya Abdual (sp), 44 N. 15th Street, MYLV, stated that her family has a business here in the city of Allentown on 15th Street. She stated that she is a Palestinian American and is here today to make three requests from City Council. The first is for City Council to propose a resolution to call on a cease fire in Gaza. The second request is that they create a Sister City with Palestine as we have a Sister City in Israel. She stated the third is ask the Police Department stop sending 20 squad cars every they hold a protest. They are scaring our youth. She stated that she wanted to share her story. Her family is Palestinian and have been displaced by three wars before she was even born and spoke about her grandfather and the massacre due to militias. They were pushed out into Syria and her mom's family was pushed out to Kuwait. In Syria, a war broke out and the war still continues on today. Israel bombed Syria today and bombing the surrounding countries. She stated that she fears for her families life every day. She received death threats and had people call them Hamas, oppose them and come to their protests calling them disgusting names and intimidating our teenagers, devaluating their lives right in front of them. They had to get the FBI involved. She had someone release her name to a white supremacy group. She was terrified and thought that someone was going to happen to her family. There were five Palestinian people who have been attacked because what has happened overseas. They are consistently called terrorists groups because they are Arab. She stated as they know they have a large Arab population here in Allentown. They are business people and they have family overseas as well and they are terrified. America should not be funding this genocide and she does not approve of her federal tax dollars going to fund a genocide to displace more people.

Mr. Mohammed Khaku (sp), 294 Hopewell Drive, stated that he lived in Allentown since 1980 and has worked with many mayors and elected officials in Allentown. he goes back to Roy Afflerbach. He used to do

campaigns for all political campaigns. He worked for many years with all elected officials. He stated that he is a freelance writer and a member of Lopoca and a board member of Lehigh Valley Justice Institute. He was the vice chair of SEIU. He still works and attend the meetings to End Mass Incarceration and he has a blog called Speak Up - Silent No More. He stated that he is going to speak up today and this comes his heart. He was watching the news. His wife doesn't watch TV. When she watches this thing on Gaza, she cries. Last night she was crying and he could not speak. The pictures coming from Gaza are disturbing and distressing for us. He asked could you imagine what is happening to the children of Gaza. He worked all his life at Peace and Justice Institute. He was following the Jewish Federation and every Saturday there was an ad in The Morning Call and billboards. He can give a lecture of 75 years of occupation by Zionist Israel. That is an occupied regime by the United Nations. They don't have any right of defense. The Palestinians have the right of defense. Zionist Israel occupying regime is an occupying regime by the United Nations. He stated that he doesn't have to give a lecture. He can give a lecture too. There are 22 UN Resolutions that have been vetoed by US. Yesterday, Biden had an exit ramp to not to veto the resolution and he vetoed the resolution. There is a difference between Zionism and Judaism. Jewish Historians have written books after books on the difference between Zionism and Judaism. He stated we are not against any Jewish people. It is against Zionism. After seeing the pictures, he hopes that they work for the resolution because silence and abstaining is a crime to humanity. You that are not going to work towards this resolution has to look into your souls and reconsider if you have a weak heart. He stated 30,000 people killed with half of them children.

Ms. Aishwarya V. thanked Council for letting her speak. As a part of the medical field, she believes that life has immeasurable value. It can be taken away in seconds, but with care and kindness it can be preserved for years. When people face such earth-shattering violent attacks and losses, they are left with PTSD and may not have a cure. Imagine crumbling at the sounds of weaponry. It is possible that any similar sound even if they are safe will take them back to that instances that broke their lives apart. She hopes that they can live in a world that they leave behind weapons of mass destruction and shower each other with beautiful flowers and all basic needs are met. This means making sure money and funds go towards things that can promote community growth. She condemned any acts of violence and ask today that they work together to create a resolution for peace and cease fire in Gaza. This revolutionary act will allow us to make change and shape a better future for the young children in our world. She thanked Council for their grace and time. She stated that she speaks for peace for everyone and can work towards making that happen. Democracy starts at the local level. A leader that uses violence to resolve

conflict isn't a leader at all and should have never had power.

Ms. Atira stated that if they are silent or neutral in the face of a clear injustice of genocide. You are on the side of an oppressor. Silence helps oppressor, not the oppressed. She stated that she is outraged that the tax dollars are used in the supplies and ammunition for Israel for killing innocent civilian for Palestine. She stated that it is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue. It is one of the worst humanitarian crisis ever seen which is happening in Gaza and Rafah. She stated that she is a pediatrician and being a pediatrician, the safety and well being of children is her utmost concern. She is seeing almost 12,000 children have been brutality killed and thousands have been orphaned and disabled. They have lost their limbs. Many have been blinded because because of the shrapnel injuries due to bomb and they are being starved now because Israel is not allowing food or humanitarian food trucks and fuel. They vandalize and resorted to using animal food and making bread out of it which is very sad to hear. With babies, there is a shortage of milk. They are giving rice water, if they are lucky to get rice. The mothers aren't able to breast feed because they themselves are starved and dehydrated. They are not producing enough to feed their babies stating that this is a very disheartening thing. The hospitals have been bombed and the last standing hospital has also been bombed. Doctors were abducted, stripped and then tortured. New born babies were left in hospitals. Later on the decomposed bodies were found. She stated that this barbarism has to stop. She request that Council pass the resolution for an immediate cease fire and reinstate humanitarian aid to Palestine.

Mr. Omar A. stated this is absolutely a local issue that the US government made it a local issue when they chose to fund and support the government of Israel unconditionally. The Pennsylvania Treasury Department has invested over \$50 million in Israeli Government Bonds. He stated \$50 million of our hard earned money that could be used here for a billion different things. They are funding a genocidal government. In 2022, the US State Department canceled \$130 million in military assistance to Egypt. A country where he is from. He grew up where 60 percent of the people live in poverty. This aid is absolutely necessary, but they canceled it. They sited a US State Government Report saying human rights abuses. That very same year, the US Governmental Agency issued a report regarding the government of Israel saying that Israel has significant human rights issues including credible reports of unlawful killings and unjust attention including the Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories. Again, this is a US government report. He asked that the city support Palestinians.

Ms. Amel Elsheakh stated that she just wants to make it clear that genocide, not war, not conflict. Genocide is the only word that could

accurately describe what is taking place in Gaza right now.

Ms. Amel Elsheakh stated that she just wants to make it clear that genocide, not war, not conflict. Genocide is the only word that could accurately describe what is taking place in Gaza right now. She stated that Israel's relentless siege on Palestine has devastated that region. Never in their history have they seen the horrific images and footage coming out of Gaza and yet it is not enough for all for you to call a cease fire. Palestinians have lost their homes, their limbs, their freedom, their families and it is still not enough. Even Israel's own admissions on their intentions to ethnically cleanse Palestine is not enough. She stated that they must create a cease fire resolution to show the nation that we are better than this.

Mr. William Mine, 1404 N. 39th Street, stated that everyone wants a cease fire, but the one thing you have not heard repeatedly all night and you heard horrible stories and he will not fight those. He will not fight their emotions. Instead he wants to tell them what they are missing out. None of them have mentioned the hostages currently in Gaza. He named the people that Israel is trying to free. He stated that there are about 100 names.

Ms. Vicki Wax, 702 N. 22nd Street, stated that you for letting me speak. Israel left Gaza in 2005. Gaza has been run by elected government of Hamas. Israel has been gone from Gaza. Gaza has a border with Egypt. All the international money that has come to help build a strong beautiful and thriving society in Gaza went to building 450 miles of underground tunnels. These tunnels have the capability of having weapons manufactured. They have had terror tunnels where they are hiding all of the money and using all of it for hate and destruction of Israel. On October 7 at 7:00 in the morning, let's pretend we are all asleep and all of a sudden while you are asleep you are then barbarically attacked in your home in Israel where they murdered children, murdered families, took all of these hostages. Israel has wanted one thing since its inception to be left alone and have peace with Israel's neighbors.

Contract Approvals: There are a few contracts for approval; the general idea is council is approving a resolution acknowledging that proper procurement procedures were followed pursuant to the city code. The Clerk will read the resolution. The Purchasing Agent, Sarrah McNeil will explain the proposal. After she explains the process, ask for comments from the dais and the public before a vote.

[15-6663](#)

R23

Authorization for Contract with Aspen Outdoors, Fisher & Son Company, Inc., Genesis Turfgrass, Inc., Nutrien Ag Solutions, Inc., and SiteOne Landscape Supply, LLC at the unit prices identified on the bid tabulation, for a total estimated sum of \$220,800 for agricultural chemicals for the City,

competitively bid.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R23 - Turf Chemicals](#)
[Resolution #30793](#)

Ms. Sarrah McNeil stated that this was done as Bid #2023-47. It was advertised on November 21, 2023. The public opening was held on December 19, 2023. The city received five bids and after the department reviewed the proposals each vendor are awarded varies parts of the contract as indicated in the bid tabulation.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30793

[15-6662](#)

R24

Authorization for Contract with Asphalt Maintenance Solutions, LLC, Chemung Supply Corp., Naceville Materials JV, Crafcoc, Inc., H & K Group, Inc., New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co., Inc., And PMG SM PA LLC (d/b/a SealMaster PA) at the unit prices identified on the bid tabulation, for an estimated sum of \$2,400,000.00 to furnish and/or deliver and/or apply road materials, including but not limited to geotextiles, competitively bid.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R24- Road Materials](#)
[Resolution #30794](#)

Ms. Sarrah McNeil stated that this was done as Bid #2024-01. It was advertised on January 2, 2024. The public opening was held on January 31, 2024. The city received seven bids. After the department reviewed the proposals, each vendor is being awarded various parts of the contract as indicated in the bid tabulation.

Ms. Cynthia Mota thanked Ms. McNeil and asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30794

[15-6665](#)

R25

Authorization for Contract with Allentown Rescue Mission Clean Team, LLC for an estimated sum of \$349,127.38 to provide maintenance

services for the City's Central Business District for year one with a possible 3% CPI increase yearly. This estimated sum includes costs for Special Events Assistance, snow clean up, and special cleanup project on an as needed basis. The estimated sum for the 5-year base contract is \$2,132,098.62. This was competitively bid through the RFP process.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R25 - Clean Team](#)
[Resolution #30801](#)

Ms. Sarrah McNeil stated that this was done as RFP2023-46 and was advertised on December 19, 2023. On January 22, 2024, the public opening was held and the city received one proposal. The evaluation committee held both technical and cost evaluations. The proposals were evaluated on the ability to meet the RFP requirements and after all the evaluations were conducted, the committee decided not to hold oral interviews. The committee recommendations to award based on the firms qualifications and overall score. The committee is recommending an award to Allentown Rescue Mission Clean Team LLC which is also a small business.

Ms. Cynthia Mota thanked Ms. McNeil and asked if there were any comments from the dais.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that the city got one bid and she is looking about the amount of payment per hour per person. She asked for some clarification. It states during winter storm events \$21.60 per hour per person for weekdays and then it goes on to specify different types of scenarios and how the payment would be. She asked is that \$21.60 going to the worker. The actual person doing the work or is that \$21.60 given to the organization and how much of that does the worker get.

Ms. Sarrah McNeil stated that she believes that is going directly to the person.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that the last time she spoke to members of the Clean Team they said they made minimum wage which is \$7.25.

Ms. Sarrah McNeil stated that all they provide the city with is the hourly wage and what the yearly cost would be for the whole entire contract.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated that would be paid to the contractor for the per hour services.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked how much are the workers getting paid.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated that is not part of the contract negotiation. She stated that she does not know the answer to that.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that it might not be a livable wage for them to get out of homelessness.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated as far as speaking to the programs and what they do, she doesn't want to provide Council with incorrect information. She doesn't know what the room and board they pay. They supply the room and board and food as well as them having them work under the Clean Team to get them into a situation where they have a steady job car of uniform and equipment, had success, then graduated from the program and coming into residency and future employment. She believes she heard them say it is about 60 percent graduation rate. They left homelessness and now rejoined and were able to sustain themselves with a permanent job.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach thanked Ms. Saurman for that answer and asked do they have any information as to how affective contracting with them has been. They were the only bidder so they got the highest score. She asked do we know if it is working. At one time, Dr. Mota a couple of budgets ago they talked about having youth help with some of the clean up issues and other folks came up here and talked about having delinquent youth help with some of that stuff. She was wondering why the city is still going with the Clean Team.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated just to clarify, the Clean Team work that they do under this contract and the one that they are proposing is not just for litter clean up in the downtown area. They are doing surrounding neighborhoods. They are doing the gateway coming in on Seventh Street. This year, they have extended it all the way to the bridge to the northside of the city. The city has expanded services with the special events as well. There are 12 now that have been listed. With the opportunity for paying per hour per person if the city wants to hold more special events, they can do that in additionally with the snow on Hamilton Street and next to the Arts Park where the city owns the property next to the Sovereign Building. They are responsible for that as well. Having all of those components as part of this contract it speaks to why it is a very specialized area. That being said, what they do is not alleviate property owners from their responsibility to clean in front of their homes which under the city's ordinances people are responsible for their sidewalk area and in front of their property to clean litter. She encouraged more still and stated that she would love to work with more groups to do clean ups and organizations. Unfortunately, there is a lot of litter out there that they want to address and the Clean Team is a component of it. She encourage volunteerism and to work with that. She cited the number from 2023 because they asked how they track it. The

Clean Team has picked up a total of 85,060 pounds of litter off the streets in 2023 alone. Of that, they are required to separate recyclables from that. That was just over 34 percent recyclables of that. The multi-purpose work scope under that addresses all of this. She encouraged anybody that wants to volunteer and clean up or even work with the messaging of Keep Allentown Beautiful. Ideally in her world, if nobody litters that would be the ultimate win and they all learn to not litter and to keep our city clean.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she appreciates Ms. Saurman.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that she really liked to see the youth getting more involved when it comes to the community. Especially, the youth on probation who are in need of providing time when they are on probation. They have to do certain amount of work. She stated that she understands that they spoke a couple of years ago about this. They said since they are dealing with youth, if something happens who will be responsible.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated that the city does work with the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation and has had a longstanding relationship with them. They work off of community service hours at the drop off center. There is a probation officer present with them to monitor them. Sign them in and sign them out with all of the hours. The city has since 1988 when they started the center had a long relationship with Lehigh County Juvenile Probation. She stated that the city used to take them off site.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated you said used to. Not anymore.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated no. They used to go up on Seventh Street and presented other challenges with monitoring the progress and being there. As they probably remember, the city tried the broom distribution where the city gave out corn brooms for free to residents just to encourage people to clean up in front of their own homes. The city gave over at least 10,000 over the years. They keep trying different methods. She is open to any suggestions Council has. She would love to get more people involved for the cleanliness and beautification of the city.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she just has to say and they have voted on this before. She always voted yes and always done so because they are providing jobs and people need work and helping a segment of the population. She stated today, she attended the Commission on Homelessness meeting and afterwards she spoke to a couple of folks and thinks it is important in all avenues and in all aspects that they all working with and investing in. Organizations that have low barriers to entry and that they do not have potentially any discriminatory practices when it comes to sexuality or religion. Although she has in the past voted yes, she will be

voting no and knows everybody else will be voting yes. She can't say, hey, let's give them more money when she has some concerns about their practices.

Ms. Candida Affa asked Ms. Gerlach if her concerns are the fact that the workers and this is a pretty large chunk of money. She stated that they are talking about \$20 an hour. She asked Ms. Gerlach if her concern is that the workers are only getting minimum wage. She asked if they get housing.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated that she believes so and food.

Ms. Candida Affa asked Ms. Gerlach if her concern is the amount of money they are getting.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that it is two-fold. Thank you for asking the clarifying question. Number one, the amount of money that the employees are making as Council as a body and them as a city has made public statements and they strive towards paying even the lifeguards \$15 an hour. To know that the city is contracting with an organization that doesn't do that, it is troublesome. Her last comment was more so referenced on the fact that apparently if they are paying them \$21.60 and the employees are only getting \$7.25, that means the vast majority of the money is going toward the organization that doesn't necessarily have the low barrier of entry in order for people to get in. Once you been in there for a certain number of days, you must enter the Christian Living Program. If you do not enter into the Christian Living Program, she guesses that they don't stay there anymore. Because she believes it is a Christian based organization, there are issues with individuals who identify as trans entering.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she knows a few homosexuals that they cannot go in there. She asked Ms. Saurman if the rest of the money going towards their housing and the expense of the housing.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated that they are not required to present the budget of how they run their facility. She stated that the city put out a competitive bid for a contractor to do a job. The contract language requires no discrimination. That is the standard language in all of their contracts. The city is engaging with a contractor who has staff to perform the work. It was an open RFP, competitively bid. Other contractors that the city work with, does the city question who they are hiring. Do you we go that road other than prevailing wage, if that is the case.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she thinks what Ms. Gerlach is pointing out is not that complicated. There is \$21.00 an hour and they are getting \$7.00. That is uncomplicating to her.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that she thinks Council needs more information.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he thinks they are having discussions about assumptions. They really don't know the breakdown on how they are doing things. They do provide room and board. They do provide meals, three meals a day. They provide services to help them get out of homelessness. How they break that down, Council doesn't know. Council is having a conversation right now on kind of an unknown.

Ms. Candida Affa stated it should not be an unknown for them.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated based on this contract approval, that is not what this contract approval is about. It is about a service they are providing to the city. A service that does very well. He is a downtown merchant. He sees them everyday and he has gotten to know these gentleman. They are great people and doing a great job. They are building a resume and gaining, and out of homelessness. He has worked with them at events throughout the city whether at Cedar Beach or downtown and they are there doing a lot of the work and they do a great job. This is really what this discussion is and with the other stuff, he is not minimizing. He is saying right now, they are trying to figure out a contract. To answer the question from earlier, they do a great job and he sees them in action.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that they do a good job. That is not the question on the job they do. It is how are they getting paid is the question. She asked why don't Council has the breakdown.

Ms. Santo Napoli stated that the Rescue Mission has to provide insurance. These folks are insured when they go out there. They have to provide Workers Comp. This is a business.

Ms. Candida Affa asked do they discriminate because they are a Christian organization.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that is fair, but he is more on the numbers right now. He is just doing the numbers.

Ms. Candida Affa stated she is just asking.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated it is a fair question, absolutely.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments from the dais or any comments from the public.

Ana Danny Negron, city employee, stated that Council is talking about the Clean Team. Throughout the years that Ana Danny has been here with the city building a relationship with the Clean Team guys. There were many times approaching them slumped over, sitting down, just not healthy looking and offered many of the times either a beverage or something to eat. One commented that he could not take any of the beverages he had nowhere to use the bathroom. Ana Danny suggested that they go to city hall and use the restroom. He stated no, he would get in trouble and will be kicked out because there was a certain perimeter that they supposed to stay in and if they are caught elsewhere or using a bathroom in an alley or an opening, they will get in trouble. Ana Danny stated that they are out in the cold without proper gloves, without proper rain gear, without proper insulated jackets. These men work hard. They are in that place to get some sort of help. Ana Danny stated that seeing throughout the years now, you tend to see them and they are just like disappear, feeling a lot for them and that program should get more into getting their medical, getting their health back, getting their apartment, getting a hooptie so they can go get a job. Ana Danny stated they are not treated fairly in the place that they are at. There are some that are a little bit on the heavy side and some got some health issues. Some are old and still struggling trying to clean these streets and the tons of trash, litter and debris in this city that the employees can attend to. Ana Danny named cleaning cash basins, sidewalks, between vehicles, stuff in the streets and everything and anything in this city. Ana Danny being at the Street Department for 16 years doing everything and anything, getting paid below \$17 bucks or \$15 bucks. They should be helped and they should be guided into getting out of that place down there. That is no place for them. They are old and been there and done it. Ana Danny suggested that they might be grandparents or somebody's parents and should be treated a little bit more fairly. The guys that are now in pickup trucks due to all the money they are receiving from the program instead of just driving around and looking at these people in the swamp air just cold, hot, hungry and sick. The Mission should concentrate more on the people that are making them more a name and giving them a position then these people in the office and look at them as though they are just a number. Ana Danny stating like in their job.

Female audience members (no name given) stated while she appreciates the mission of the Clean Team, she has seen them out doing work as well. This is not a question of the ethics of the people that are cleaning the streets, but is troubled by the idea of paying them low wages. These are the people at their absolute lowest who are depending on the Rescue Mission to help them out of poverty and putting them in a position where they are kind of being exploited to clean the city and being forced into slave wages and continuing the cycle of poverty. The minimum of \$7.00 something is never going to get them out of poverty. She stated that we

are only exploiting them and keeping them in that cycle. If they would agree to assist them or a contract that would only pay them that. That would be a really big part of the question. What are they going to be paying the people cleaning the streets? She stated \$7.50 is not going to help them. Even \$20.00 an hour is not helping people stay out of poverty and helping them these days. That is something that would seriously needs to be considered if renewing a contract with them. The Rescue Mission is supposed to be helping people, not keeping them there long term to benefit their business because as one of you said, it is a business. They are going to run it like a business because they need people to stay there so they can stay open. She asked for that to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked Ms. Mota if he might since they are making a lot of assumptions on things they don't know and asked if it is critical that they vote on this tonight or maybe postpone it and get some of the answers you want. He stated that he is reluctant to vote on something with so many questions.

Ms. Cynthia Mota agreed with Mr. Hendricks. She asked is it possible that Council can postpone.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked if that will be a problem.

Ms. Ann Saurman stated that the current contract will expire on March 5th. She asked what is the date of Council's first meeting in March.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that Council has to realize that this is extended for five years. They can look five years from now and they still be making \$7.00 or \$8.00 an hour.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that Council already tabled it. Hopefully, they will get more information before they bring it to Council.

A motion was made by Ed Zucal, seconded by Ce-Ce Gerlach, that this Resolution be Tabled.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30801

[15-6661](#)

R26

Authorizes lease agreement with Ami Martin and family for residential property located at 200 Springhouse Road, Allentown, PA 18104. The agreement is for \$19,103.52 for year one (\$1,591.96 a month) with a CPI increase for the second year of the original term, with a five (5) one (1) renewal options. This will be a two (2) year lease with five (5) one (1) year renewal options. For year new year, the lease will be increased based on

the CPI percentage indicated on the official US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R26 - 200 Springhouse](#)
[Resolution #30795](#)

Ms. Sarrah McNeil stated that this lease could exceed five years and therefore is required to bring before Council for approval. It is just a renewal lease. They have leased this property since 2019 and they would like to continue to lease the property from the city.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked who is Ami Martin. She knows typically these houses go to the former Police Chief who lives in one, CEOs of organizations tend to get these homes. Who is Ami Martin and what does she do or did she do?

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she was selected from as Ms. McNeil was stating in 2019, the city had put out a form to complete for all interested parties who was interested in renting city owned rental property and she was one of the successful persons who bid and they selected and went through background check and ended up selecting her as a tenant for the city property.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked what was or is her profession.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she does not recall, but can provide that information. She stated that Ms. Martin has been paying rent and was on-time since 2019, but she does not recall her profession at this time.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated she definitely would appreciate that. This has come up before during the housing shortage and housing crisis and people who are paying \$1,500 for a studio. They see this and say who is this Ami Martin and why does she get this. It would be great to know. She stated that she hopes Ms. Martin is some random resident that happened to fill out a form and got a house, but the other folks are not random residents. They are people of power within the city. Hopefully, she is just a random one.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she is absolutely is and she will provide Ms. Gerlach the information she is seeking.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments from the dais.

Ms. Candida Affa asked if they are required to keep up maintenance with painting or a broken window or whatever. She asked if that is their responsibility as opposed to another landlord like where she lives, it is up to them for them to keep the maintenance up on the property. She understands that people she knows that live there, they actually put money into it and refurbished it at their own cost. She asked if they have to keep up with the maintenance. That is quite a nice price for a home. What kind of maintenance they have to keep up with.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that is an excellent question. The contract does state that they have to maintain the property. It is a routine maintenance. (painting, replacing of bulbs) not broken windows. That is the city's responsibility. Any type of capital maintenance. Roof repair, door broken, windows are the city's responsibility. Other maintenance and repair of the sink broken. That is different. That is their responsibility. She stated that is detailed and spelled out in the lease agreement.

Ms. Candida Affa asked about the credit reports.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she was part of the selection committee when Ami and her family moved in. It was back in 2019 when she was managing the property. She had an email sent out citywide and many interested parties filled out a form. She was selected and a background check was done at that time and then the city selected her.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments from the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30795

Minutes of Previous Meeting

[15-6582](#) January 10, 2024 Special Council Meeting Minutes (Organizational Meeting)

Attachments: [January 10, 2024 Special Council Meeting Minutes \(Organizational Meeting\)](#)

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

[15-6676](#) February 7, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [February 7, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes](#)

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

[15-6693](#) February 15, 2024 Special Investigation Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [February 15, 2024 Special Investigation Committee Meeting Minutes](#)

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Communications:

Chasers: If you parked in the city lot next to City Hall, please see the City Clerk for a voucher.

City Council and the Mayor have received the Auditor General's report on the pension funds; the reports are part of the agenda and will be reviewed at the Budget and Finance Committee Meeting next Wednesday.

[15-6696](#) Auditor General Reports

Attachments: [MunCityofAllentownAggPF021224](#)

[MunCityofAllentownOEPMRS021224](#)

Old Business

Mr. Julio Moreno stated that he is going to talk about two cases. The first case, inspectors from Allentown interfered with an owner of a home that did a contract with him. He went to the Lehigh County Courthouse and he had a child that was sick in the hospital. He stated that there is corruption in the city because the inspector spoke to the owner and he interfered and that is why he was taken to court. The judge did not really listen to him. They only listened to his wife and also his son. The judge told his family to leave the courthouse. He was then out of the country to take care of his mother. There is corruption. They took him out of the house because the heating system was bad. He stated that he was the one that helped the owner with the heating system. The other case is about a van that he had. His vehicle and the issue is the Parking Authority. They will give people tickets. His van was full of cleaning products and things that he has bought. He did not have a place to put his clothes, items and things that he has bought before. He will put everything in the van. The van had insurance and was ok. He was given a ticket of \$800. He had to borrow money. The second time, he got his car towed.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked Mr. Moreno what would he like Council to do.

Mr. Julio Moreno stated that The Parking Authority has to be for his van and all the items that he had inside the van. He spoke to the Mayor and told him that he did not have enough funds to pay for the van when it was towed. He wants someone to take care of it. He went to get a repair man and saw his van inside the towing place. He stated that he was pushed when he went to get his van in the towing place and threatened. He called the police. He got harassed and pushed.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he has his information and will give him a call.

REPORTS**Budget and Finance: Chair Napoli, Hendricks, Gerlach**

The Committee has not met since the last council meeting; the next meeting is scheduled for February 28th, at 6:15 PM.

Community and Economic Development: Chair Hendricks, Mota, Napoli

The committee has not met since the last council meeting; the next meeting is not yet scheduled.

Human Resources, Administration and Appointments: Chair Affa, Napoli, Santos

The Committee has not met since the last Council meeting; the next meeting is scheduled at 5:30 PM on February 28th.

Parks and Recreation: Chair Santos, Affa, Gerlach

The Committee met this evening; the next meeting is not yet scheduled.

Public Safety: Chair Zucal, Hendricks, Mota

The committee has not met since the last council meeting; there are no future meetings scheduled at this time.

Public Works: Chair Gerlach, Affa, Zucal

The Committee met this evening; the next meeting is not yet scheduled.

Rules, Chambers, Intergovernmental Relations, and Strategy: Chair Mota, Napoli, Gerlach

The committee has not met since the last Council meeting; there are no future meetings scheduled at this time.

Controller's Report (3 minutes)

Mr. Jeffrey Glazier stated that a couple of meetings ago, Mr. Zucal had asked about gift cards. He wanted to point out to Council that they released a gift card audit of CED on the 11th of January and everyone got a copy of it. They released a gift card audit of the mayor's office on the 22nd of January. Everyone got a copy of it. The findings were gift cards supposed to be purchased through Purchasing. In either instances, they were not. He attributed that to turnover or new people in the department. Both departments said they would absolutely comply going forward. They have one or two of the audits in process. When they are completed, they will be forwarded to Council in the normal fashion.

Mayor's Report (3 minutes)

NONE

[15-6695](#)

Controller Reports

Attachments: [Bank Rec - Oct 2023](#)
[Status Review 2020 Risk Report](#)
[Check Review](#)

ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On): The Clerk reads the bill.

The Chair gives the committee recommendation on the bill, comments are taken from the administration, the dais and the public before a vote is taken.

[15-6602](#) Bill 2
Amending the 2024 Capital Fund Budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of One Thousand Six Hundred Dollars (\$1,600) from the Hispanic American Organization, Inc. to support the mini-pitch system at Jordan Meadows.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 2 Hispanic American Organization Donation Ordinance #15978](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 15978

[15-6601](#) Bill 3
Amending the 2024 Capital Fund Budget to correct a previous ordinance number 15951. This will appropriate the funds of Six Hundred Fifty Thousand (\$650,000) Dollars from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to support design and construction of the D&L Trail – Allentown Segment to the proper accounts.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 3 D&L Trail DCNR Grant Correction Ordinance #15979](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 15979

[15-6603](#) Bill 4
Amending the 2024 Trexler Fund Budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of Two Thousand (\$2,000.00) Dollars from the Trexler Trust to support the Romper Day Program.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 4 Romper Day Appropriation](#)
[Ordinance #15980](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 15980

[15-6605](#)

Bill 6

Amending the 2024 Capital Fund Budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of Sixteen Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Six Dollars and Thirty-Six Cents (\$16,896.36). This was the result of payment in lieu of tree plantings from Tilghman Street Dental LLC, City Center Development Corporation, Housing Development Corporation, Devon Self Storage Holdings, Lehigh River Development Corp 3, 1134 Hanover Ave LLC, and Stratagem Allentown LLC. Funds will be used for the purchase of new street trees.

Attachments: [Bill 6 Shade Tree Funds](#)
[Ordinance #15981](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 15981

CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda is for items that are considered ‘no brainers’ – the objective is to vote on all the resolutions at one time if there are no issues. The President asks if there is any request to remove any item from the Consent Agenda. If not, the clerk will read the resolutions. The President will ask for public comments, prior to council voting on the bundle.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there are any comments from the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

[15-6673](#)

R 27

Carlos Rodriguez, Allentown Housing Authority, 2-22-2029

Attachments: [R27 Allentown Housing Authority, Carlos Rodriguez, 2-22-2029](#)
[Memo from Mayor Matt Tuerk regarding the Appointment of Carlos Rodriguez \(Allentown Housing Authority\)](#)
[Carlos G. Rodriguez, Esq. Resume](#)
[Authorities, Boards, and Commissions \(Allentown Housing Authority\)](#)
[Resolution #30796](#)

Enactment No: 30796

[15-6674](#)

R28
 Certificate of Appropriateness for work in the Historic Districts: 503 W. Allen St: 23 N. 12th St.; 433 N. 8th St.

Attachments: [R28 HARB Resolution](#)
[23 N 12th St Final Review](#)
[433 N 8th St Final Review](#)
[503 W Allen St Final Review](#)
[Resolution #30797](#)

Enactment No: 30797

RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On): The Clerk reads the resolution. The Chair gives a committee report if applicable, comments are taken from the administration, the dais, and the public before a vote is taken.

[15-6571](#)

R12
 Authorizes the City of Allentown to adopt a Vision Zero Policy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe, traffic-related injuries.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R12 Vision](#)
[Allentown Vision Zero Introduction Presentation](#)
[Resolution #30798](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the administration, the dais or the public.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30798

[15-6619](#)

R22
 Authorizes the Administration to enter into a cooperation agreement with the Allentown Parknership, to utilize the organization’s fundraising and planning capabilities to raise money to finance and manage capital improvement projects, manage construction, provide enhanced maintenance, provide programs and special events, coordinate volunteer

activity, and to pursue such other authorized opportunities and address recognized needs, for the betterment of the city's parks.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R22 Authorizes Cooperation Agreement](#)
[Parknership Cooperation Agreement](#)
[Park Res Amended](#)
[Resolution #30799](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated that she wants to add the amendment that was introduced by the administration.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked what is the amendment.

A motion was made by Natalie Santos, seconded by Ce-Ce Gerlach, that this Resolution be amended in the fourth Whereas after the Cooperation Agreement you would add the words in the form and at the end of that sentence and incorporated herein (the "Cooperation Agreement") and in the first Now Therefore Be It Resolved, change the a to the.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30799

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

A motion was made by Cynthia Mota that this Resolution be approved as amended. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30799

[15-6660](#)

R29

City Council hereby determines and concludes that outside the Purchasing Agent neither the Director of Finance nor anyone from the Administration should participate in scoring or be present during the process to select a response to the RFP selecting investigatory services since it is an investigation of the Administration.

Sponsors: Gerlach, Hendricks and Mr. Zucal

Attachments: [R29 RFP](#)
[Ordinance #15948](#)
[Code Contracts Provisions](#)
[Charter Provisions on Council Investigation Authority](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that some of them may or may not know that back in early Fall, there were some issues that arose and complaints that were made about the administration on the way that handled hirings, firings and some other internal stuff. Shortly thereafter, he asked for an outside investigation and quickly and briefly read what the powers of Council are under Section 210, entitled Investigations of the Home Rule Charter. In addition to the authority power of the City Controller to conduct audits under Section 403D of this Home Rule Charter, Council shall have the power, by ordinance, to make or cause to be made, investigations, audits or studies of the City and the conduct of any City department, office or agency, and, for this purpose may retain professional and technical assistance, subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, take testimony, require the production of evidence, and provide funds for such investigation, audit, or study. He stated that on October 4th, Council had a meeting here and that meeting was to determine whether or not Council was going to approve the investigation. At 57 minutes and 07 seconds of that meeting, Mayor Tuerk said that the administration welcomes this investigation. In addition, he said that the mayor's office welcomes this investigation. He stated that they needed at least four members of Council. At 57 minutes and 45 seconds of that meeting, the mayor urged Council to grab the seven votes and let's proceed with this investigation. Since that time, Council has been met with nothing but resistance with regards to this investigation. The most recent thing is obviously RFPs are required for contracts. It is not an issue. He stated that he doesn't have an issue with that. The issue that he has is the inherent conflict of the Finance Director being a part of that group of people. Meaning the committee to choose the evaluation. He is surprise that they wouldn't even think it is a conflict. He stated that if he is before the Lehigh County Court on a murder charge, he highly doubt that the District Attorney's office would allow him to pick the jury that is going to set him free. He stated that is where they are at here. He stated that the Finance Director is Ms. Patel. Obviously, the Code states that she supposed to be a part of it. He understands that and don't have an issue with that. The issue that he has is the integrity of the investigation. He wants this investigation and doesn't care how long it takes, when it starts to be the most integrity thing that has ever happened in this city. If it is going to be tainted then they probably should not do an investigation. He had department heads come and tell him that they have been told not to cooperate. That's up to them. That's on them. That's not on him. About a month ago, Ms. Patel sent out a letter which he was contacted by the unions about. To her staff that nothing negative should be said about the Finance office or anything without the permission. He stated that yesterday he received a text and this is what the text said and by the way it was sent out on February 15th at 8:58 in the morning. By the way, last Thursday was

February 15th and there was a meeting here to pick a committee for this investigation as well as to talk about the Resolution #29 for tonight. He stated that this is what was sent to him yesterday. Good Morning, Council has scheduled a Special Meeting tonight regarding the Investigation RFP. No one from the Finance Department should attend today's Council meeting. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you, Bina. He asked how are you going to sit here and tell him she can be independent on this investigation. If you vote against this Resolution, that tells him you want a tainted investigation. He stated that quite frankly he doesn't know what the answer is. He asked Attorney Smith that they should look into this further because as it states they may retain individuals to pursue. He is not even sure if they have to go through the RFP process. In the past, Council has hired outside firms to do an investigation without the RFP process. Is that something we need to look at? He stated to Attorney Smith that he does not have to answer that tonight.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she shares the same concerns that her fellow Councilperson stated. She is to aware of a meeting that occurred she believes in October that department heads were told by the City Solicitor on behalf of the mayor to not cooperate with the investigation. She stated that it will be denied, but they are aware of that. That is concerning. That is concerning that they were told that. Here were are already before the investigator even got here that there is already this resistance. It is a clear conflict of interest. It is a conflict of interest that we don't need to go down that path because as the Council's Solicitor had stated during the Special Meeting, when you look at the language of the Code that governs who should be in those meetings, it's talking about bureau heads. She stated that they don't have bureau heads as a Council. You can't pick and choose aspects of a Code to apply unless you are going to apply the whole Code. She stated that she will wait. She stated keep going.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated to Ms. Gerlach, no. Continue. She wants to know. Go ahead.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated furthermore she would ask the city to provide how many RFP processes the Scoring Committee has the current Director of Finance participated in. If this is like a common practice then she would think all of them, right. She would like to know. It seems to be pushed really hard right now that a member of the administration is part of selecting who is investigating them. She stated that something doesn't sit right with her. She asked her colleagues does it sit right with them. Does it? Does it sit right with you that an administration would send a memo out to Council

threatening with Sunshine violations if Council doesn't allow the Director of Finance to choose who is investigating them. She asked does that sit right with them. Why are they going so hard on this? She stated that if it sits right with you then ok. Something is up. Something is up. She urged them to support this Resolution. She urged Council to do so and if the mayor wants to threaten to not sign the contract unless they listen to him and the Solicitor. Then let him not sign the contract and they have to deal with that when that comes.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais.

Mr. Santo Napoli asked if it is possible to hear from either the administration or Council's Counsel just to get a better background here.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated as of the conflict of interest issue, the Director of Finance has reviewed the city's Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest. He stated that is Chapter 36 in the Administrative Code. She confirmed that she does not have a conflict of interest per that chapter and can perform her job as dictated by the Code in a fair and impartial manner.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked if someone from the administration confirm because her understanding is the RFP processes is usually the Purchasing Agent, Sarrah McNeil who is there doing a lot of the guiding and department heads, bureau heads, what have you even though it is written is having the department head for Finance typical and specifically right now, the current department head. She asked how many RFPs have and stated that she has to understand why is it being pushed so hard. If this is just run of the mill and always happening, ok cool. She asked if she could get an answer on that.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that there is always the director or the designee on the RFP. The individua you are describing, the Purchasing Agent is someone there to assist with the technical aspects of it and on the grading. He stated that is what we always have.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked if specifically there is always the Finance Director there.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that is what the Code requires.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she is asking is there though. The Code requires one thing. How many RFP processes has this particular Finance Director participated in since she has taken this position since it seems to be very important to the administration that this particular person is there.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that it is either Director Patel or the Deputy Director Baraket. One of those two.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated Jessica Baraket. The same person who right now if we were to do this RFP process would be in the room with us guiding us so that same person.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal asked what is your question.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked Attorney Rosenthal if he is saying Jessica Baraket who is the one who has been going to the meetings on behalf of.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she has been attending some of the RFPs stating that she also has done some of them. Ms. Baraket has done some of them. The Finance Department is always involved. There is always a Finance presence at RFP vendor selection. Each and every RFP, the city has done, there is always Finance presence.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked is it for items the administration and are not things like this where Council initiated this investigation based on the City Charter. They are different types of RFPs. For like the Rescue Mission and things like that.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that this a Professional Services RFP. So for every Professional Service, it is the same procedure. It requires the Director of Finance, the Bureau Chief and the Director of the Department.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that they need some help here because how do they get over the fact that it says that Council needs a bureau chief. Council doesn't have one. She asked how do they get over the fact that they don't have as a body doesn't have a department head. She stated that if they are going to have to comply with the Finance Director, they should have to comply with the entire Code, right.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated yes.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked so how do we do that since Council doesn't have a bureau chief.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that Council's authorizing ordinance said that they were going to work with the Procurement office to implement proper procurement matters. He stated that is a question for you. He stated that they have established that the Finance Director is required by Section 521.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked why did the administration support this in the first place. If it is impossible for them to comply with that Code by not having a bureau chief and not having a department head since Council doesn't have one. Why would the administration say hey, I support this and why would you.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that he does not have a position on this.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she knows that the Finance Director in one either the Deputy and she is aware of that way back in the Pawlowski era. She asked Ms. Patel if she has a vote on it or she is just there to guide.

Ms. Bina Patel stated there is a vote stating she would have a vote on it. If there are four members, her vote has a value of 25 percent.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she understands what Ms. Gerlach is going with this here. This is unprecedented. They never had an investigation of the administration which you are part of to be part of the voting process. She stated that she trusts Ms. Patel and know that she would do, but that is not the point. The point is how it looks to the public and everyone else that they are doing an investigation of the administration. She stated if Ms. Patel was there like the Purchasing Agent, but you do have a vote. In that case she would have to agree that it doesn't seem like it can pass the sniff test with somebody. She stated no offence to Ms. Patel. She stated that she knows that this has been the process. The thing is that they never done this before. This is not like your ordinary RFPs. She stated that this is where she is concerned and has to agree with Ms. Gerlach or yu. She stated that if she is the one that is being persecuted or investigated, she doesn't think she should have a vote which the administration does.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated she is glad because she was going to go into a rant.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that it is not like a vote. You are scoring into already preselected criterions that exists in the RFP. You are scoring according to an existing metrics. That is different than a vote.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he wanted to bring it up and he wants to make sure they are all clear on that. He stated that he wants to be clear. Not just him, but the public.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she wants to walk everyone through the process. What the Finance Department, the Finance Director or designee does in this process is that they help select a vendor. There is a scope of work that is designed and all they are doing is does this vendor meet what we are

looking for. The city is looking for this services. Does this vendor meet that? And, that is what the vote is. It is not technically selecting. It is making sure what the city is seeking is what they are providing. The second part of that RFP process is the cost factor and does that meet the cost factor. That is already outlined already in the RFP. It is just making sure that this vendor meets that work scope. That is what the scoring is. It is not selecting the Finance Department or designee or herself as Director is never part of the investigation. It is part of the selection of a vendor.

Mr. Santo Napoli asked if they know who the other three folks are. He stated that he is just curious. He stated that you mentioned four people. He stated that if Ms. Patel would be 25 percent, who would be the other three.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated Mr. Zucal, Ms. Gerlach, and Mr. Hendricks.

Attorney Charles Smith stated as it stands now, the Resolution that is being recommended has three people. That is what the Resolution says. That is what is in front of you. That is what came out of the Investigation Committee meetings. It excludes the Director of Finance. That is what is in front of you. If there is any consideration for alternatives that might be more palatable to the mayor on whether he is going to sign this. When they are done with this, they would have to amend it, but if not what's in front of you is a recommendation that you adopt the resolution. The Investigation Committee recommended to you a resolution that says that it will be scored by three members of Council. Councilperson Zucal, Councilperson Hendricks, and Councilperson Gerlach. He stated that is what is in front of you.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that at this point, Ms. Patel's vote is irrelevant. She has 25 percent and the Committee has 75 percent. He doesn't see the waiting.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that here is what he thought the issue in the committee was. If he is not saying this properly then tell him. He thought the issue was if they get through the Technical Proposal, go to the Cost Proposal and you do interviews. Having someone from the administration could have a chilling affect in that conversation.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated not only that, she is right. She does the Cost Analysis and all that stuff. The other issue is any questions that they would have for the individuals they have selected, she will also have an opportunity to be a part of that question and answer session.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated with the people that are going to be

investigating.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated the administration.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that his last question is that the RFP is written. Any discussion would have nothing to do with the RFP itself. He stated that he is just trying to understand this. The RFP has already been written and worded in a way that this committee has no jurisdiction in changing that in how the investigation is being conducted. This committee is solely in the fact that who are they picking to actually run the investigation. He stated his understanding they have a couple of vendors and already in the bidding and it is a matter of who is going to get this business. Nothing in the document can be changed at this point. It is a done deal.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that is correct. You cannot alter the RFP.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he wants to make sure that he is clear.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated no because of the Rules. If someone else wants to speak. She stated that she already spoke. She will wait until someone else speak. To the point where it would be like three against one. They are not a monolith They got Mr. Zucal, Mr. Hendricks and herself. She stated aren't we different. They definitely do not necessarily look at things in the same way and score things the same way. She doesn't necessarily see it as a 75 percent versus 25 percent deal. She stated that it is not about Ms. Patel as a human. This is about a member of the administration being a part of an investigation. It is that simple. It is not about questioning or integrity. It is not anything about that. It is just about this very clear having someone in the administration choosing who was investigating them is just wrong. It is not right.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked what is going to happen if they only go and say ok, we just want three people and not anyone in the administration. What's going to happen? Will the mayor sign or will he not sign? She stated that she just wants to know the options.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated unfortunately he is going to have to refer to the memo that Law provided last week.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked what was the memo. Can you read the memo?

Attorney Adam Rosenthal asked the whole memo, no.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that most important thing of the memo.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that the most important thing is that he is not going to sign it.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that Council can refer to the memo. He is not going to read it here.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that this is the problem. This is what she is saying to them. This is the problem.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated if Council has legal questions, please provide them to your Solicitor and he can relay it to them.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked Attorney Charles Smith if he can read the portion of the memo that states what the mayor will and won't do.

Attorney Charles Smith asked for a moment while he pulls it up.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that they are going by the law pretty much because they mentioned when you have an RFP, there is always someone in the administration.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that is correct.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that again, Council has never had an investigation.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that she just wants to make sure that it is clear that someone from the Finance Department, Finance Director, Deputy Finance Director, is part of the RFP vendor selection.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked Attorney Smith.

Attorney Charles Smith stated that he has so many emails for Allentown.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated to Attorney Smith that he could use his.

Attorney Charles Smith stated that essentially the Solicitor's office would advise the mayor not to sign the contract because it does not comply with the city's procurement process. He stated that is what would happen and then it will be up to the mayor whether or not he would follow that advice or whether he would act over that advice. He stated that is where we are. They are really in an area of first impression for the city. The Code provisions as set forth in the Resolution don't neatly apply into the situation that they find themselves in. The question becomes do you want to plow forward and vote on the resolution, if it was to be passed as it stands now. There is a possibility that the mayor would not sign the agreement or do

you want to consider an alternative that would be acceptable to the administration and they would agree to sign this thing. He understands the very principled position and he doesn't disagree on what they are saying. He is talking in terms of practicality. Whether Council wants to consider something that they would agree to move forward with, but if not, what they can do is vote on the resolution that came out of the committee, recommending 3 - 0. If that were to pass by Council as a whole, then that is how they would go. Then they would find out whether or not the mayor would sign it. He stated that he supposes that they will cross that bridge when they come to it. He stated that is procedurally where they are right now.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he beat him to it because he feels that it happens during his day job. They reach a stalemate and things never happen. They want this investigation to happen. They all agree on that. How they move forward could stall that. That is what is aggravating. He is trying to think of a compromise or a solution that makes everything works to move this thing forward. That is just him again and his day job and his experiences. How do they get this thing forward because if not, they are going in circles and that wasn't the intention. The intention was to run an investigation. He is speaking out loud here and obviously with his colleagues, is there something that works for everyone so they could just move this thing forward.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked how could we compromise. That's the question. She asked how are we compromising.

Attorney Charles Smith stated that at this point that you can do if someone felt that there was an alternative. They could do a Motion to Amend. The Resolution has been recommended. It hasn't been passed. It is in front of them now in that recommended status. Someone could say, well, I offer this amendment and then you could vote on that. It could be shot down and then boom, you are right back to where it is right now. He stated he guess that would be the point where they are at. If someone felt that there was an appropriate alternative. They can propose that in a form of a Motion to Amend. He stated that then you can vote on it. It goes up or down and he thinks at that point they have to vote of the resolution in its current form or as amended.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that before Council amend, they should have public comment. He stated that Ms. Affa has a comment.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she is going way off the grid here. Since the Solicitor advised the Mayor not to sign it, she is wondering since they have a room full of attorneys here. If Council should go with just three and

breaking the city's Code or how everyone is saying and not have the Finance Director in on it. Hypothetically, if someone is convicted or not convicted. Could that person then lose their job and then sue the city because it did not conduct the investigation on the RFPs the way they suppose to. The way the Code says. She asked if they could answer that. Hypothetically, it is her and she was found guilty. She is going to lose her job and now she is going to sue the city and one of the things she is going to sue on is the fact that they did not do the process with the RFP. They did not allow the Finance Director in on it. She asked if that is a possibility.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that he doesn't want to give legal advice in a public setting and in this scenario. He stated if Council wants to have an executive session to discuss it. He is more than happy to.

Ms. Candida Affa stated if they did something different in the Code what they normally don't do. This person can say, they didn't conduct it the right way.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that if the proper procurement procedures aren't followed, Council opens themselves to all of the penalties and anything that could happen instances where individuals didn't follow the procedures and did what they wanted with the RFPs and gave significant amount of city funds to those individuals they determined without going through the proper procurement procedures.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that was her question, Attorney Rosenthal answered. If Council doesn't do it the proper way, it is a possibility they will sue and say that the city did not investigate it the way they normally do.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated more than that. You are open to anything that could happen.

Ms. Candida Affa stated yes, she knows and understands. She stated that was just running through her head.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that he wants to be very clear, they not at all not interested in following the proper procedures. They are interested in not having a conflict of interests.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that if she could again add that to say that Council is not following the proper procurement procedures is a false statement. The current procurement procedures as stated by the Council's Solicitor don't neatly apply to this situation. It is a false statement to say that they are not following the procedures that don't exist for them.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal stated that he would like to follow up on Councilperson Zucal's comment. The city Code, Chapter 36 specifically delineates all the conflict of interests reasons why a person should be eliminating. As he stated, the Director reviewed it and did not find anything in there that applied to her. If Council has things that meet elements in 36, provide them to your Solicitor and he can bring them to the Law department and they can evaluate if they are valid. The Code specifically identifies what is a conflict of interests and what would eliminate a specific person from an RFP Committee. That still wouldn't act to eliminate the Director of Finance. It would just eliminate Director Patel. It would be next man up.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated let's do public comment.

Ms. Karen Ocasio stated that it is no secret that she used to work here up until November 20th when she was fired for speaking up and she wasn't given a reason why she was fired. She wants to say in her three years of being in HR and doing RFPs, she can recall Jessica Baraket being there, but she doesn't recall the current Director being in the RFPs stating even right before she was fired. She stated that she is not sure if Ms. Patel was ever part of them at all. She asked if they can focus on the fact that her email violates the Sunshine Act. These type of settings are open for the public. She stated anybody can show up, correct. She asked if she is wrong about that. She stated that Ms. Patel already shows that she is bias and trying to keep people from coming and people to support and things like that. She stated that Ms. Patel is already showing this and showing that she wouldn't give an unbiased score based off of whatever her beliefs may be. She asked Council if they can focus on the fact that the administration is the one who is being investigated. They should not have someone from the administration scoring on anything. She stated that they all think differently. What if they vote on a company or a person that may be affiliated and they don't know about. There is a lot of opposition from the administration and that is clearly showing that they are hiding something. If they weren't hiding something, they would be completely open. Yes, let's do it however you want it because they have nothing to hide. With so much opposition, it is clearly showing something. She stated that they violated her rights. They violates her and other employees. They do not need to have anybody from the administration scoring on anything. Because they will do especially if they are scared for their jobs. She stated hello, she was fired for no cause stating we know that he will fire them, if they don't do what he says. She stated stick to your guns and don't allow Bina on this.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal asked Mr. Hanlon what is the email that is being mentioned.

Attorney Charles Smith stated that the email Ms. Patel sent to her

employees about the investigation Committee meeting.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated on the 15th. Usually there are people from the city. Y'all are here tonight. At that meeting, there was absolutely nobody.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated on the 15th.

Attorney Adam Rosenthal asked at the committee meeting last week.

Ms. Phoebe Harris stated that she is going back to the email. She stated to her, Ms. Patel violated the Sunshine Act, she is impeding on an investigation, she is trying to influence unduly. She stated that she is listening to Ma. Patel speak and stated that she is taking it personal. She stated that she is listening to Ms. Patel speak and answer questions and she still doesn't answer questions. Every meeting that she has gone to that Ms. Patel has been in, she never answers questions. Why does she still have a job? She is putting you all and stated have it been her with school board and the Finance Director has put her in the hot seat because of what she just did and violated the Sunshine Act. She would not be here anymore. She stated that she would figure it out. She would have to go to her employer and figure that out because it's coming down on y'all. What she did came down on y'all. She stated to Council you are elected by the city. She isn't. She is an employee and gets paid by the city. Y'all are elected by the city. You are the governing board. She is asking them to please take that letter seriously. That email very seriously because it was wrong. She feels that Ms. Patel should not be and why would the Finance Department be part of. That is like the fox guarding the hen house. Why are they a part of the RFP stating that makes no sense to her. All of them ask and thanked Ms. Affa for her question too. She stated all of them asked great questions so she doesn't know if they are going to be figuring it out during executive sessions or table it for now. The Finance Department should not be part of it when they are the ones being investigated.

Ms. Barbara Redmond, NAACP, stated that the investigation involves the administration and there is going to be an administrator in there hearing things that the employees are talking about and it is going to go back to the different sources and people are going to be fired or harassed. She stated that they are hearing about people being harassed, unions are telling the employees not to be involved in investigations. The administration is telling people not to be involved in the investigation. She asked what is that telling them. There is something wrong and something to hide. Why do you need another administrator to sit in on an investigation when the investigation is about them. She stated that she guarantees them that anybody or anyone that is involved and any administrator is going to be scoring is involved in

the investigation. There are so many people involved in this investigation and it is really sad that the city of Allentown is treating the Black and Brown employees. It is pitiful. They need to be investigated and the administration don't need to be involved. She hopes that they all vote tonight to move it forward and if they mayor decides he doesn't want to sign it, that says a lot about him. That shows that he has something to hide.

Ana Danny Negron, Employee of the city of Allentown for 18 years, stated that being glad that eventually and finally getting into this since being with the city since 2007. Did everything and anything. Went above and beyond the job description for this city and put wear and tear on the body for so many years. Doing as much as they could to clean the streets and have safe streets so the people can start enjoying the outdoors and the crimes will lesson. Ana Danny stated coming here months ago, year 2023 and since then the retaliation has been off the woe and been getting written up every three weeks. There have been false accusations because the city is building a case. Everything and anything that looks horrible on the books. All of the stuff they are saying Ana Danny would not hire and would think of as the worse scum. Being called egregious and did not know what the word meant. Googling the word and asking the person upstairs what the word egregious is and didn't even know what it was and asking the person who wrote such complaints and write ups. When Mayor Matt Tuerk came to office, Ana Danny stated being the first person to whistle blow. Sending emails and calls and s

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Enactment No: 30800

ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION (To be referred to Committee with public comment prior to referral): The Clerk reads the bill; comments are taken from the public noting the bill will be discussed in detail at a committee meeting – the legislation is referred to the proper council committee.

[15-6666](#)

Bill 8

Amending the 2024 Trexler Fund Budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of Eight Thousand Six Hundred and Thirty-Four Dollars and Seventy-One Cents (\$8,634.71) from the 2023 Springwood Trust, Trexler operating budget of the Parks Department to the 2024 Springwood Trust, Trexler operating budget for the purpose of purchasing benches and the installation of concrete pads at Trexler Memorial Park.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 8 Trexler Springwood 2023 Funds](#)
[Ordinance #15983](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the

public.

REFERRED TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

Enactment No: 15983

[15-6667](#)

Bill 9

Amending the 2024 Capital Fund Budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of One Million, Three Hundred Thousand (\$1,300,000.00) Dollars from the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) grant for the purpose of rehabilitating the historic Bogert's Bridge, located in the Lehigh Parkway.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 9 - PennDOT Grant Funds Appropriation](#)

[Ordinance #15984](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

Enactment No: 15984

[15-6668](#)

Bill 10

Amending the 2024 Fire Department budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00) from The Hartford grant for the purchase of a fire extinguisher simulator.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 10 Fire Dept Hartford Grant](#)

[Ordinance #15985](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Enactment No: 15985

[15-6669](#)

Bill 11

Amending the 2024 Fire Department budget to provide for a supplemental appropriation of Sixteen Thousand Dollars (\$16,000.00) from Norfolk Southern Rail, Safety-First grant. This grant is to purchase hazardous materials related equipment for incidents that may occur as a result of a railway incident along the Norfolk Southern railway that runs through the City of Allentown.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 11 Fire Dept Norfolk Southern Rail Grant](#)
[Ordinance #15986](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Enactment No: 15986

[15-6670](#)

Bill 12

Amending the 2024 Grant Fund budget to accept Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000) from the FY 2023 Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program Phase 1 strategy development grant.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 12 - Recompete Phase 1](#)
[Ordinance #15987](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Enactment No: 15987

RESOLUTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION (Can be voted on or Referred to Committee):
The Clerks reads the resolution. Comments are taken from the administration, the dais, the public before a referral is made to a council committee where a detailed discussion will take place.

[15-6613](#)

R30

Amending Council Rules by prohibiting Council Members from engaging in discussion and voting at Council Meetings by remote participation to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Act and having an adverse impact on council business conducted during that meeting.

Sponsors: Affa, Hendricks and Mota

Attachments: [R30 Remote Participation](#)
[Options and City Info](#)
[Sunshine Act downloaded 12-27-23](#)
[PSBA-Guidance-on-Remote-Board-Meeting-Attendance](#)
[UNC article remote participation Aug 2013](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she introduced this because she believes from the day she became a Councilperson, especially when it comes to voting. She would like to have the Councilperson here and she does not know where this Councilperson is, who is sitting next to this Councilperson, if someone is influencing this Councilperson, and she believes it is their duty as an elected official to come to the meetings especially for the conversations and especially voting. She doesn't on the phone who you are sitting with and who is influencing you. She stated that they are the only city that does this. Bethlehem does not. You must attend our meetings to vote. She thinks it is very crucial. She could be sitting in her Livingroom and being influenced by the mayor sitting next to her. She stated that you don't know that and this is the reason why she proposed this. It is not a reflection on anyone. She just believes that as Council, they should attend their meetings and if we can't, if we are sick or on vacation stay away. We have a quorum. You don't have to vote. She doesn't want anyone voting that she can't see them sitting here voting.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments from the dais.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she will get into this at the committee level. There have been people who have been sick, have been in various parts of the world, and they have voted. That means no whatsoever regardless of family emergencies or whatever. She stated that she knows years have went by where people were not here.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she knows, but Allentown is the only city that does that.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she thinks Lehigh County allows their folks to vote.

Ms. Candida Affa stated she knows that Bethlehem doesn't. If you are somewhere out of the country where you are on vacation or you are sick. It was different when there was Covid because they were all at home voting. She doesn't believe that there is no reason that you are sick or on vacation and there is a quorum here and doesn't believe through the telephone and sitting wherever you are sitting, you should be voting on especially things that are very important that they are voting on. She doesn't want anyone to be influenced and she doesn't know that. She stated that Ms. Gerlach doesn't know. No one knows who is being influenced by voting. People try to influence all the time. If they are sitting right next to her and say I can vote this way. It is not impossible, but it can happen. She thinks that Council should attend all the meetings. She stated to Ms. Gerlach that she herself said that they have many times have to sit here for hours and things they

have to do because they are elected officials. One of those things is to be present. She stated that they get their vacation and get their sick time like everyone else, but when they miss meetings after meetings. She is not just talking about them. What about the future? What about somebody else that is going to be sitting here on the dais that may not be as trustworthy as they are. She is talking about the future. She doesn't think that it is a good thing for somebody to be voting when they are not present in the Council Chambers.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments from the dais.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked when will this meeting be that they will be discussing this.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that it hasn't been setup yet.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that it is going to happen.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that this will be an important conversation because this will affect all of them. She can't think of one person who hasn't had to call in. Mr. Zucal seems to be here all the time, but everyone else.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that one day he came late and they were about to call 911.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that they have all been on vacation and have all been sick, but that doesn't mean they can vote. If she is on vacation, she may look at the agenda and say well I should stay here. Suppose she is gone for three votes. Three times. Three times she is voting in a row.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that has happened before.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated with other Councilmembers.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated before this current year. Before she even got on Council.

Ms. Candida Affa states yes and he quit.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if that was Dr. McGuire.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that he doesn't think he participated by phone.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that if you are on vacation you should not be voting on things. She stated that she doesn't know where they are at or what they

are doing. She thinks the public thinks the same way.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that the positive thing is that this will be introduced to her committee.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated before it is introduced can Council get from the county since they do allow their Commissioners to vote. She stated Ms. Affa referenced Bethlehem.

Ms. Candida Affa stated and Easton and Stroudsburg and so many.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that it would be great to see what the county is doing. The county that we are in.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that they have information that might even be in the file. A lot of people do a lot of different things.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the public.

Mr. Drew Swedberg, Civic Theatre of Allentown - Film Manager, stated that he wants to attest of Mr. Zucal being on-time at Jefferson Elementary School when he was working there. He was also reliably there every day. It is really really important when you consider this to really be thinking about ableism and accessibility. He understands what Ms. Affa is saying about vacation time, but as she said about the future they have to think about a future in which immunocompromised folks, folks that have chronic illness, folks that have different abilities, and can be beyond Council. With people that he loves dearly that are immunocompromised that have different abilities, it is not always possible for them to be in these spaces and urged them to not set a precedent that discouraged folks. Those folks that are here are privileged to be abled bodied. It is a framework that is really important for them to be thinking about as they are thinking about this Resolution. He understands what they are saying about all the different things that they just said. For instances, people were talking about microphones today. That is an accessibility issue. He doesn't know that the agenda items are on the screen supposed to be updated every time something is put out. That is an accessibility issue. He urged them as this moves forward to just bring that framework in and really be thinking about the future. Folks that aspire to be in this position who are differently abled and chronic illness compromised. Covid has taught them a lot about accessibility and ableism and it is really really significant for that framework to be discussed with whoever it comes to and make sure that is really being incorporated of of you are thinking about and whether it is exceptions or thinking about what that looks like. He has a very dear friend who is missing four weeks and have to teach online for four weeks. Would that

mean she would have to be fired? Those conversations have come up for her and had to hide her status for fear of being fired for being immunocompromised.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that nobody gets fired here.

Mr. Drew Swedberg stated that he did not hear her talk about the framework and really thinks if they move this forward to really incorporate that into how you are thinking about this.

Ms. Karen Ocasio stated that Ms. Affa made a great point about people having to be here and they don't know if someone is sitting next to her. She stated that they all know that people have relationships and have discussions before they come to Council and get swayed that way. Does it matter that you are on the computer and it says in 2020, they all have gone remote. Everything is remote. It is a time for them to move forward with everything that is going on in life and being able to go remote. It is normal. When she had a job, before she got fired she was working remote to and was able to complete her duties just as much. People can get swayed one way or another when they go to dinner before Council. That is not really a preoccupation. She stated let it be and let people go remote if they choose to. If they are sick and need a babysitter. Let them go remote.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated to keep in mind they are going to have the conversation at the committee meeting. They are going to talk more about this.

Female audience member stated that she was home schooled through high school. She knows what that looks like. Lockdown browsers and making sure your cameras are on so that no one is around you. There are many ways as they were saying about being accessible. If you are concerned about people being here in the present and you forget that in the fall, she is a preschool teacher and a social worker so RSV, strep throat, Covid, the flu and a lot of things come along and when you are immunocompromised like herself and many others in this room, you have to take a lot of time off. You can also look into instead of saying everyone should be here. Why don't you look into your budget and say let me get everyone laptops and lockdown browsers and make sure if they have to be home they have access to that instead of coming in and saying no, you should be here and I don't trust you. You could be influenced. Make the proper accommodations because if you are talking about the future, the future is tech savvy. And, we are not going back.

REFERRED TO THE RULES, CHAMBERS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE

[15-6671](#)

R31

Council recommends ARPA funds not appropriated be directed to towards offsetting any potential tax increase and used for critical infrastructure projects.

Sponsors: Affa, Hendricks and Mr. Zucal

Attachments: [R31 ARPA Resolution](#)

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

GOOD AND WELFARE: NONE

ADJOURNED: 9:52 PM

[15-6577](#)

Reference Materials:

Council Rules

Procurement Code

Ethics Code

Attachments: [Procurement Code](#)

[Ethics Code](#)

[Rules](#)