

MINUTES FROM THE BETHLEHEM REVITALIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY (BRIA)

December 5, 2024

3:30 p.m.

1.0 Call to Order

A meeting of the **Bethlehem Revitalization and Improvement Authority (BRIA)** was held at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at Town Hall located at 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Ms. Collins called the meeting to order.

2.0 Roll was taken as follows:

Authority: Laura Collins
Donna Taggart
John Filipos
Mark Jobes

Solicitor: Edward Andres

Staff in attendance: Sean Ziller
Denise Rider
Heather Bambu

3.0 Public Comment

None

4.0 Approval of Minutes dated July 18, 2024

A motion was made by Mr. Jobes and seconded by Ms. Taggart to approve the minutes. Being no further discussion, the minutes were approved 4-0.

5.0 Treasurer's Report

5.1 January 2024 through November 2024

Mr. Filipos reported total income of \$1,989,092.42. Approximately \$1.5 million will go to developers for their share of the increment, professional service fees, and wire transfers. The cash balance is \$1,317,203.63. BRIA will be sending approximately \$293,000 to the Bethlehem Parking Authority and \$129,000 to the City for administrative expenses. \$500,000 is in the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). Mr. Jobes inquired about the status of the RLF, which led to a discussion that will occur in Old Business. Ms. Collins requested a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Filipos made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Jobes.

6.0 Old Business

Ms. Collins noted that the Steel General Office (SGO) was granted funds through BRIA. Exterior demolition and abatement work started on the East Annex portion of the building. The first set is being funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant through the City, and the Bethlehem Economic and Development Corporation (BEDCO) in the form of a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). Solicitor Andres relayed that BRIA will take title during construction and escrow a deed to convey the title to the recipient upon completion. Ms. Collins stated that the construction of the medical office buildings at the Martin Tower project was approved after some back-and-forth with the Commonwealth about the application, and how the CRIZ portion interacts with the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP). A revolving line of credit was established because of the increment from last year. \$500,000 was put into it and is still available. Ms. Collins introduced Alex Miller, the new Economic Development Coordinator in the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Mr. Miller is working on the RLF guidelines. Ms. Collins noted that there are no identified projects yet. She then asked the BRIA if they had any topics or questions for old business. Ms. Taggart asked about the status of underdeveloped properties. Ms. Collins stated a large majority is portions of the steel site. Ms. Taggart then asked about the status of the Historic Hotel Bethlehem project and the need for credible info from the developer. Ms. Collins noted that the hotel has been granted two extensions, with the next one expiring in May 2025. They want to have the CRIZ designation as an incentive to sell the hotel. Ms. Collins stated that the acreage would go back to the bank of properties if they didn't move forward. Mr. Jobes suggests reaching out to the hotel developer for updates. Mr. Filipos offered to speak with Bruce Haines, Managing Owner of the hotel. Ms. Collins noted that there have been property owners asking about acreage and stated that, if they were to become viable projects, BRIA would likely have enough acreage banked to consider them. The hotel project is approximately .25 acres and BRIA possesses slightly over an acre of available acreage. There was continued conversation regarding the Hotel Bethlehem project.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Increment Distribution

Ms. Collins provided the BRIA with the annual certification letter from the Commonwealth of PA Department of Revenue. The total increment distribution is \$1,773,348.41 and \$144,450.65 in local taxes. A significant portion of the increment was allocated to Administrative costs and the Flex increment. Ms. Collins noted that the proposal is that the remaining Flex go to the Bethlehem Parking Authority for the Polk Street garage debt service. Ms. Collins asked if there were any questions from the BRIA. Mr. Jobes questioned if he should abstain from voting because he is on the Parking Authority. After some discussion, Mr. Jobes decided to abstain.

Mr. Jobes asked the status of the Wilbur Mansion project and how it was operating versus what had been expected. Ms. Collins noted that they are on track with other projects and they advised her that the demand for the event space is increasing and they are, therefore, often at room capacity. Being no further questions or comments, Mr. Filipos made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-03. Ms. Taggart seconded it. Mr. Jobes abstained due to his involvement with the Bethlehem Parking Authority. Being no further discussion, the motion was approved 3-0-1.

8.0 Solicitor's Report

Mr. Andres reported that the Wingstop project for Six 10 Flats may be looking to close soon. Ms. Collins believes it will open in the next couple of months.

9.0 Chairperson's Report

Ms. Collins noted that we will probably not have the next meeting in December. Ms. Taggart asked if we still have a vacant set on the BRIA Board. Ms. Collins noted that she talked with the Mayor and he proposed a few candidates. She advised anyone to let her know if they have anyone in mind.

10.0 Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2024.

11.0 Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the BRIA, a motion was made by Mr. Jobes and seconded by Ms. Taggart to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Signed by: Donna G. Taggart
Print Name: Donna G. Taggart
Print Title: Secretary

