

# MINUTES FROM THE BETHLEHEM REVITALIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY (BRIA)

March 20, 2025  
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, March 20, 2025, 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 - Absent

Solicitor: Edward Andres

Staff in attendance: Sean Ziller  
Denise Rider  
Heather Bambu  
Alex Miller

3.0 Public Comment  
None

4.0 Approval of Minutes dated February 20, 2025  
A motion was made by Mr. Filipos and seconded by Ms. Taggart to approve the minutes. Having no further discussion, the minutes were approved 3-0.

5.0 Treasurer's Report  
Mr. Filipos noted that the only change from the last meeting was the \$2,169 interest earned. Ms. Collins requested a motion to approve the Treasurer's report. A motion was made by Ms. Taggart and seconded by Mr. Filipos. Being no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

6.0 New Business

6.1 CRIZ Qualification Request – High Hotels  
Ms. Collins provided background information for the project. The request is for .33 acres. Five parcels will be consolidated into one tract that is not

currently CRIZ-designated. She noted that this would leave 1.488 acres available, taking into account anything uncommitted and the removal of .1515 acres that were approved at the last meeting for the Wilbur Expansion project. Ms. Collins turned the meeting over to JJ Fives, representing the developer, High Hotel, and High Real Estate.

Mr. Fives gave an overview of who they are, which can be found in the request for qualification letter dated March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025. He noted that, based on their research, South Bethlehem kept coming up due to the array of demand in the area. He said the CRIZ component is critical to deliver the project as planned. The hotel brand is Tempo by Hilton, a newer upscale select-service hotel. The brand flexibility to incorporate elements of the local environment into the hotel's design. The drop-off canopy and outdoor patio slightly encroach on the Greenway, and they are working with the City of Bethlehem (the City) to mesh their design with the existing Greenway concept plan. Their goal is to create a connection between the hotel and Greenway, and enhance the area's public space and accessibility. Mr. Fives thinks the project is a good way to clean up the area. He also noted that they have experience with the CRIZ program in Lancaster. He then asked the BRIA if they had any questions.

Ms. Taggart expressed her gratitude that the site is finally getting some use. She initially felt like there were a lot of hotels built in the last few years, but wants the project to be successful and commended them for doing market research to back it up. Ms. Taggart also commented positively about the Greenway extension, noting it would be an improvement to an area that has lacked for a long time.

Mr. Filipos asked for clarity on the plans discussed with the City regarding the Greenway. Mr. Fives noted they are working with the City to integrate their plan with the Greenway. Their plan for a rooftop canopy, outdoor patio on the back of the building, and walking access to the garage and building, slightly encroaches on the Greenway.

Ms. Collins noted that on the City's side, there is a Greenway concept plan that has been in existence prior to this project. She confirmed that there have been many meetings with the City and High Hotels regarding the integration. She noted that the block is viewed as a gathering place with plans for a possible performance space and seating areas. High Hotels have also attended multiple meetings with the Historical Conservation Commission (HCC) and recently received their second recommendation for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Ms. Taggart asked how the guests would access the garage. Mr. Fives stated that they are planning ground-level access and connecting a walking

path from the sidewalk behind the garage to the back vestibule of the hotel.

Mr. Fives discussed the potential increment generated by construction and after opening. He also noted that they are projecting a 14-year holding period, which aligns with the brand's mandated renovation schedule. This potentially leads to an exit or sale around 2041. Mr. Filipos asked why it would be in 2041. Mr. Fives explained that their strategy for newer hotels is to potentially avoid unnecessary renovations if possible, and they have to assume an exit date for financial modeling purposes. He reiterated that they are not committed to selling, but need to include an exit strategy in their financial projections.

Ms. Collins asked Mr. Fives to provide details about their overall process. Mr. Fives stated that the schematic design was completed, and the land development process is pending finalization of the Greenway design details. They plan to close on the land by the end of September and start site work after the acquisition. There is an 18-month construction timeline and a targeted hotel opening in April 2027. They received their second recommendation from the HCC and have minor things to take care of.

Mr. Filipos asked if any part of the street front would be leased to other vendors. Mr. Fives indicated that the street front would be part of the hotel, featuring a lobby bar, and all food and beverage outlets will be open to the public.

Ms. Collins noted that she did not include a Resolution in the packet. Mr. Andres stated that a motion can be made to approve a resolution substantially similar to 2025-02. A motion was made by Ms. Taggart and seconded by Mr. Filipos. Being no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

7.0 Solicitor's Report

Mr. Andres provided an update on the Steel General Office (SGO) project. He explained that the BRIA will temporarily take title to the property as part of the process. As grant funds are accessed, the property will eventually return to its original ownership. BRIA holds the deed in escrow.

8.0 Chairperson's Report

Nothing to report.

9.0 Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for April 3, 2025.

10.0 Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the BRIA, a motion was made by Mr. Filipos to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.

Signed by: Donna M. Taggart

Print Name: Donna G. Taggart

Print Title: Secretary