

MINUTES FROM THE BETHLEHEM REVITALIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY (BRIA)

February 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, February 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 Jobs - Absent

Solicitor: Edward Andres

Staff in attendance: Sean Ziller
Denise Rider
Heather Bambu

3.0 Public Comment

None

4.0 Approval of Minutes dated December 5, 2024

A motion was made by Ms. Taggart and seconded by Mr. Filipos to approve the minutes. Having no further discussion, the minutes were approved 3-0.

5.0 Treasurer's Report

Mr. Filipos presented the Treasurer's Report noting that we have a healthy cash balance. He advised the Board that \$129,000 will be due to the City of Bethlehem in 2025 for administrative expenses. The audit is nearly complete and there are no issues so far. Having no further comment, Ms. Collins requested a motion to approve the Treasurer's report. Ms. Taggart made the motion, and it was seconded by Ms. Collins. The motion carried 3-0.

6.0 Old Business

6.1 Opening of New Account for Revolving Line of Credit

Ms. Collins stated that the Board previously approved the creation of a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to potentially fund projects within the CRIZ. The guidelines are being worked on and will be brought back to the Board. Being no further discussion, Ms. Collins referred to Resolution 2025-01 in the meeting packet and requested a motion to authorize opening the new account. Mr. Filipos made the motion to accept the Resolution (2025-01) as presented in the Board package, seconded by Ms. Taggart. The motion carried 3-0.

7.0 New Business

7.1 CRIZ Qualification Request – Wilbur Mansion Expansion

Ms. Collins noted that there is a request for CRIZ qualification from Mr. Noble (Principal of IP Wilbur LLC). This project was not part of the 2013 application and is not on CRIZ designated land. The BRIA will be looking at qualification of the project, assigning it available acreage, and then submitting, if approved, to the Commonwealth for their review and approval. Ms. Collins then recognized the applicant.

Mr. Tipton (Attorney for Mr. Noble) spoke first. He indicated that they are requesting BRIA to approve the resolution in their packet, which would initiate the certification process, and allow them to add 251 Cherokee Street to the existing funding agreement. Mr. Tipton referred to Mr. Noble for additional comment.

Mr. Noble thanked the BRIA for their prior approval. He discussed the importance of additional rooms due to the success of the Wilbur Mansion project. They currently have nine hotel rooms and are looking to add seven rooms at 251 Cherokee Street due to increased demand. He stated that he has been before the City and the Zoning Board to get all approvals required. It will have on-site parking for over seven cars to avoid impacting the neighborhood. He stated that with the increase in building costs and high interest rates, the project will not be sustainable without assistance. He then turned the meeting over to the BRIA for questions. Ms. Collins noted that Mayor Reynolds reviewed the project and is in support of it coming to the BRIA.

Ms. Taggart asked Mr. Noble if a zoning change was needed. He stated that it is in line with what he had already been done for the Wilbur Mansion and similar to what has been done at the Sayer Mansion. The relief was kept inside the lot by adding on-site parking.

Mr. Filipos asked where the acreage is coming from. Ms. Collins noted that there is currently 1.3721 acres that are banked and not committed to any projects. The project before the BRIA is for 1.515 acres. Mr. Filipos then asked what increment would be generated from the project.

Mr. Noble stated that the expansion is projected to generate at least \$300,000 and approximately two new employees. They are currently turning away events due to lack of on-site rooms.

Mr. Filipos noted that he supported the initial project, but wondered if the property could have other uses. Mr. Filipos expressed concerns about the project's potential impact on other applicants and fairness of the application process. Ms. Collins noted that there are no active applications for acreage, but there will be at least one coming for less than one half of an acre. There is currently 1.37 acres available, not including the outstanding 1.07 acres committed to Hotel Bethlehem. There have been discussions with the previous Mayor about the folks from the Goodman project requesting .28 acres. Not including those projects leaves 2.6 acres available. Ms. Collins stated that of the projects that she is aware of, we have enough acreage to accommodate any project. She noted that the BRIA would consider all applications fairly and that the expansion benefits the existing project. Ms. Taggart mentioned that the project was already invested in, and if this allows him to continue to be successful, she supports it. Having no further discussion, Ms. Collins requested a motion to pass Resolution 2025-02. The motion was made by Ms. Taggart, and was seconded by Ms. Collins. The motion carried 3-0.

8.0 Solicitor's Report

Mr. Andres noted that there have been conference calls regarding the ISRP grant for the SGO building. The funding agreement for Wing Stop was never finalized to get the increment. Closing is moving along. Wing Stop has to pay fees and sign documents. Ms. Collins noted that the BRIA previously approved the execution of the funding agreement.

9.0 Chairperson's Report

Ms. Collins advised the BRIA that the Statement of Financial Interests form is in their packet and they should return to Ms. Rider once complete.

Ms. Taggart asked for the status of Hotel Bethlehem. Ms. Collins noted that the BRIA approved an extension on May 19, 2022, for three years. Mr. Haines reached out stating he would like to be put on the agenda.

Ms. Collins believes there will be a new application before May for another .34 acres for the property next to the 3rd and New Street building. It is currently falling down. The property will be part of the hotel project that High Hotel Group is doing.

10.0 Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for March 6, 2025.

11.0 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 G. Taggart

Print Name: Donna G. Taggart

Print Title: Secretary

Date: 3/20/25