

Councilman Callahan: “Let’s give a break back to the residents”

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Budget](#) April 9, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on the City Budget* 

Bethlehem City Council meeting **April 6, 2021**

Perhaps the most interesting part of last Tuesday’s April 6 City Council meeting came near the very end under new business.

A discussion of the \$33.7m in Covid money coming to Bethlehem from the federal government. Business Administrator Evans advised that half will arrive this summer, half a year later, and that there will be eligibility guidelines and that information should come in a month or so.

Once it’s clear what the parameters are, then there will be discussion of how to spend that money, and Mr. Evans said there were ideas of opening discussion up to the public.

Councilman Callahan made 2 welcome suggestions, that residents be given a rebate of the 5% tax increase and that funds be put to affordable housing, supporting the efforts of Councilwoman Crampsie Smith in that direction.

The tax increase is raising \$1.5m, just a fraction of the Covid windfall.

Looks like we’re in for some good discussion in a couple months! About how to spend all that money in the best possible ways.

Audio Player not available in this archive

selections from [Stephen Althouse, “Bethlehem to consider zoning change, OKs policies to reduce stormwater fees.” April 6, 2021.](#)

Council approved legislation adopting policies and regulations which determine stormwater user fee credits and how property owners could appeal the stormwater fee the city assigns them to pay. The stormwater

fee a property owner is charged is based on impervious area on the property, according to the city.

Residents have two ways to reduce that fee. One is by reducing the impervious area and the other is by having a stormwater management structure on the property. Those structures include dry and wet ponds, wetlands, bioretention, bioswales and filter strips, permeable pavers and green roofs.

During the new business portion of the meeting, in discussing what he called a “windfall from the federal government” in COVID-19 funding, Councilman Bryan Callahan said it would be a “goodwill gesture” to provide rebates to property owners. Last year, council voted for a 5% tax increase, which Callahan said was challenging for taxpayers struggling during a global pandemic.

“Let’s give a break back to the residents,” said Callahan.