

# Council of the City of York, Pennsylvania

Edquina Washington, President of Council  
Betsy Buckingham, Vice President of Council  
Elizabeth Bupp, Member of Council  
Teresa Johnescu, Member of Council  
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## MINUTES February 17, 2026 6:00 p.m.

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**CALL TO ORDER:** President Edquina Washington called the February 17, 2026, meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, 101 S. George St., York, PA, with the following members present: Ryan Supler, Elizabeth Bupp, Teresa Johnescu, Betsy Buckingham, Vice President, and Edquina Washington, President with President Washington presiding.

**Members of the Administration in attendance included:** Sandie Walker, Mayor; Jim Gross, Interim Director of Public Works; Michael Muldrow, Police Commissioner; Beth Bowman, Human Resources Director; Adam Smith, Acting Fire Chief; Daneen Collier, Senior Accountant; and Brett Flower, Assistant Solicitor.

**City Council Staff in attendance included:** Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk.

I. Public Comment:

Don Hake (resident) expressed his appreciation for the democratic process and free speech. He raised several questions regarding a form he submitted at a previous meeting, inquiring about the "journey" of such forms and the timeline for receiving a response. He also addressed concerns regarding property inspections, stating that the former head of the tenant-occupied inspection department had informed him that inspection information was kept secret-. He cited a specific instance where he was required to replace a stained bathroom ceiling tile and questioned if such enforcement was consistent or "selective," which he argued could lead to corruption. Mr. Hake further inquired about inspector compensation, qualifications, training, and vetting processes. Finally, he questioned the fee structure for inspections, asking how amounts were determined and why reinspection fees must be paid in advance. He requested data on the number of yearly inspections and the percentage that pass on the first attempt.

City Clerk Thompson took full responsibility for the delay in processing Mr. Hake's previous form, admitting she had forgotten to submit it to the administration and promised to follow up via email.

Rubi Manzo (resident) stood with other community members to advocate for immigrant protections. She emphasized their shared humanity beyond partisan politics and economic divides. She shared that her family has built multiple thriving businesses in York City over the past three years. As a graduate of York High and Penn State with a degree in political science, she spoke about witnessing injustices faced by minority communities for the "sake of profit and capitalism". She asserted that poverty is a

universal issue and that elected officials have a responsibility to care for citizens regardless of immigration status-. Ms. Manzo noted that while the state government offers affirmations, neighboring towns have taken proactive steps toward protection. She urged Council to move beyond words, specifically mentioning President Washington's 2024 "Trust Act" (Welcoming Act) which was vetoed by the previous mayor. She expressed fear that bias could lead to community members being detained by ICE simply for stepping outside.

Alyssa Jackson (Dover) spoke for the third consecutive meeting against the presence of ICE in the community, accusing the agency of violating rights and instilling fear. She noted that ICE has recently purchased warehouses in Pennsylvania for potential detention centers. She argued that the community cannot rely on federal or state governments and called for a "bottom-up roots-up movement" to ensure local safety, ending with the plea, "ICE out".

Michael Walker (resident) clarified that he was not speaking for the administration, but as a citizen to ensure the record reflected the truth regarding Michael Doweary. He addressed a comment made at a previous meeting suggesting the city needed more than a "local tax accountant" to handle audit backlogs, noting that while Doweary was not named, the context clearly implied him. Mr. Walker detailed Doweary's credentials, including his role as CFO of York College and his instrumental work in the financial turnaround of Chester, PA. He explained that the current work in York involves reconciling a six-year backlog of audits that originated under the previous administration and was further complicated by a cyber-attack on city infrastructure. He praised Mr. Doweary for sacrificing time from a high-level position to assist York out of "financial disorder".

Angela Ramirez-Garcia (resident) thanked the council for listening and specifically thanked Councilwoman Bupp for her personal regards after previous meetings. She expressed concern over disrespectful and belittling social media comments, specifically under York Daily Record posts, regarding students who participated in a February 5 walkout. She cited comments calling the students "future fast-food workers and SNAP recipients" and others supporting ICE. She urged the community to defend students' rights to engage in political movements. She also shared that undocumented friends and DACA recipients are currently living in fear, with some considering leaving the country because they no longer feel safe in the lives they built here.

Lester Abbott (resident) congratulated the council members and Mayor Walker on their election, expressing high hopes for the new administration. He thanked the city for removing the ugly barricades on North George Street and commended the city crews for filling potholes and plowing snow in his neighborhood. Turning to national issues, he compared ICE to the "Brown Shirts" of 1930s Germany, describing them as a paramilitary group that terrorizes minorities while wearing masks and using unmarked cars. He applauded the Walker administration for reportedly not supporting 287(g) agreements with ICE.

Tyler Nell (York County resident) identified himself as a native of Lancaster and a proud Pennsylvania Dutchman who has lived in the county for two years. He spoke about the treatment of immigrant communities, calling the acts of violence and detention "evil" and "unmatched". He mentioned that it was only recently that undocumented people were approved to receive ashes for Ash Wednesday, comparing religious suppression to historical atrocities. He stated that even undocumented people deserve better and should be helped to integrate rather than be subjected to vile conditions.

There being no further discussion, the public comment session adjourned at 6:32 p.m.

- II. Called Legislative Meeting to Order: 6:32 p.m.
- III. Roll Call
- IV. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

- V. Moment of Silence was observed.
- VI. Action on previous meeting Minutes of [February 3, 2026](#) (legislative). Council dispensed with the reading of the minutes and unanimously approved them as written.
- VII. Presentations, Awards and Announcements

► **Proclamation:** President Washington presented a proclamation to retired Fire Chief William Sleeper, honoring his 33 years of service to the City of York. The proclamation detailed his career starting in 1992, his rise through every rank to Chief in 2021, and his status as a fourth-generation York City firefighter.

Chief Sleeper thanked the Mayor and Council, stating it was a privilege to serve and that he never specifically aspired to be Chief but was glad for the opportunity to implement changes. He expressed his support for Chief Adam Smith to continue the department's growth.

► **Sarah E. O'Brien, Director, Downtown Inc** ([View presentation](#)): Director O'Brien provided a comprehensive presentation on 2025 accomplishments and 2026 goals. Highlights included:

- The merger with York County Economic Alliance.
- Management of the York Business Improvement District (BID), which assesses one mill on commercial properties and has not seen a funding increase in nearly 30 years.
- Installation of five new trench drains on South Beaver Street and the planting of 100 new trees.
- The inventory of over 1,800 trees and the delivery of two portable restroom units.
- Completion of a new mural at the York County History Center and the auditing of 754 light poles.
- Fundraising for street outreach and additional police shifts.
- National recognition by Reader's Digest and HGTV, as well as national accreditation for the first time since 2013-. Looking ahead, she noted plans for more tree plantings, a public art "toolkit," and the issuance of liens for delinquent BID property owners.

**Youth Council:** President Washington announced that applications for the Youth Council Committee are being accepted until March 23, 2026.

- VIII. Meeting(s) Scheduled:
- **Council Committee Meeting:** Scheduled for Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agenda items are due by 12 noon on February 18th.
- **Legislative Meeting:** The next legislative meeting of Council will be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agenda items are due by 12 noon on February 25th.
- IX. Status of Prior Committee Referrals: No reports.
- X. Legislative Agenda: (Order of Business – Action on Subdivision/Land Development & HARB Resolutions; Final Passage of Bills/Resolutions; New Business)

## Subdivision/Land Development/HARB:

1. Resolution No. 13 - A Resolution  
Accepting the recommendations of HARB. ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Elizabeth Bupp  
Originator: HARB

Resolution No. 13, Session 2026, A Resolution accepting the recommendations of HARB in issuing certificates of appropriateness for work to be covered in the following applications: 518 S. George St., 476 W. Philadelphia St., and 221 W. Philadelphia St., was introduced by Bupp, read at length, and on motion of Bupp, seconded by Washington, Resolution No. 13 PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Supler, Bupp, Johnescu, Buckingham, Washington - 5; Nays - 0.

Final Passage of Bills/Resolutions: None

New Business - Introduction of Bills: None

## New Business - Items for Consideration of Consent Agenda

2. Resolution No. 14 - A Resolution  
Appointing Adam E. Smith as Fire Chief. ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Edquina Washington  
Originator: Mayor

Resolution appointing Adam E. Smith as Fire Chief, was introduced by Washington, read at length, and motion of Washington, seconded by Johescu, Resolution No. 14 came up for discussion.

Mayor Sandie Walker spoke extensively in support of Chief Smith's appointment, beginning her remarks by asking all city department heads in attendance to stand as a visual representation of their collective support for Chief Smith. She detailed Smith's career trajectory, noting that since joining the department in 2010, he had risen through the ranks of Captain, Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, and Acting Chief. She asserted that every promotion was earned through performance, professionalism, and leadership. The Mayor highlighted Smith's educational credentials, which include advanced degrees in Emergency Management and Business Administration, and his achievement as the first department member to complete the National Fire Academy's managing officer program.

Mayor Walker further elaborated on the operational successes achieved under Smith's leadership as Acting Chief, including the recording of over 6,000 hours of training in 2024 and the fact that 75% of personnel are now registered EMTs. Most significantly, she credited him with improving the city's ISO rating from a Class 3 to a Class 2, a ranking that places York in the top 7% of fire departments nationwide and makes it the highest-rated municipality in York County. She concluded by describing him as a forward-thinking and disciplined leader who is deeply invested in the community, having chosen to build his life and family within the city.

Chief Smith then addressed the Council, expressing humility at the nomination and thanking his wife, Britney, for her unwavering support. He reflected on his beginnings in 2010 as the first of three firefighters hired after a seven-year hiatus, crediting the invaluable expertise of veteran firefighters who mentored him as a young buck from Maryland. Smith detailed his rigorous professional development, including earning a Master's Degree in Emergency Management from Millersville University and obtaining a Fire Officer 4 certification, which is the highest level available. He also noted his credentials as a fire investigation technician through the International Association of Arson Investigators.

Regarding his vision for the department, Chief Smith shared a leadership philosophy inspired by various authors stating his goal is to "give your people a purpose, set the parameters they must work within, and then let them shine". He expressed a commitment to empowering personnel to make decisions within their realms of responsibility, encouraging initiative and creativity, and expanding community outreach and partnerships. He stated his desire for the department to be a well-run organization that serves as a model for exemplary service.

**Vote:** There being no further discussion, Resolution No. 14 PASSED by the following vote: Yeas – Supler, Bupp, Johnescu, Buckingham, Washington – 5; Nays – 0. Mr. Smith received a standing ovation from members of the audience after his appointment was confirmed.

3. Resolution No. 15 - A Resolution Authorizing ARPA funding for York Community Resource Center. ([View](#)) (\$200,000.00 for the York Tec Centro Trades Facility)  
Introduced by: Betsy Buckingham  
Originator: Business Administration/Finance

Resolution No. 15, Session 2026, A Resolution authorizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in the amount of \$200,000.00 to York Community Resource Center, Tec Centro Trades Facility to expand programs, was introduced by Buckingham, read at length, and on motion of Buckingham, seconded Johnescu, Resolution No. 15 came up for discussion.

AliceAnne Frost, Tech Centro, explained that the funding is intended to support a facility focused on providing six-month vocational training programs. These programs are designed to certify students in high-demand trades, including HVAC, plumbing, electrical work, and building/facility maintenance. The facility aims to graduate approximately 120 students per year, providing them with the skills necessary for immediate employment in the local workforce.

Councilman Supler expressed reservations regarding the documentation provided to Council for review. He pointed out that the agreement packet included blank conflict of interest forms and was missing "Attachment A," which is the document that typically defines the specific scope of work and project details. Supler argued that voting on an allocation without seeing the finalized project scope or ensuring that conflict disclosures were signed was a matter of poor oversight.

Assistant Solicitor Flower addressed these concerns by explaining the city's two-step process for ARPA funding. She clarified that the resolution before Council was strictly for the allocation phase. She stated that the missing attachments and the conflict-of-interest forms are part of the contracting phase, which only occurs after Council approves the funding allocation. She said the administration compiles the full, signed packet once the legislative authorization to move the funds is secured.

Ms. Frost explained that the application had been submitted to the previous administration, including the pre-construction costs for their trade's facility, and that all required paperwork had been completed and provided at that time.

Councilwoman Bupp echoed concerns raised by Councilman Supler regarding the lack of documentation in the council packet. She stated that she found it confusing that the scope of work was missing from Exhibit G of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). While she acknowledged that the project was a holdover from the previous administration, she sought clarification on whether Council would eventually see a finalized agreement containing these details.

Despite her procedural concerns, Bupp was highly supportive of the organization itself. She praised Tec Centro's impact, noting they had graduated 95 students in their first year, and she expressed that she was really happy to continue to support them with this allocation.

Assistant Solicitor Flower provided the legal and administrative context for the missing documentation, explaining that the legislative process for ARPA funding is divided into two distinct phases: (1) The Allocation Phase: Flower clarified that Council was strictly voting on the allocation of the funds, not the finalized legal agreement itself; and (2) The Contracting Phase: She explained that the full contract packet, which includes the scope of work, completed conflict of interest forms, and other attachments, is typically compiled by the administration only after Council approves the appropriation. She further noted that while there was no formal plan to recirculate the completed agreement back to Council for a second look, the finalized contract is a public document and could be provided to them once finished. Lastly, Assistant Solicitor Flower took responsibility for the confusion. She admitted that because this specific resolution was a holdover from the previous administration, she had been responsible for getting the packet together for Council. She apologized for the lack of the scope of work, acknowledging that Council members usually do have the scope of work in their packets and that its absence was her oversight.

**Vote:** There being no further discussion, Resolution No. 15 PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Bupp, Johnecu, Buckingham, Washington - 4; Nays - Supler - 1. Councilman Supler said he voted "no" due to significant concerns regarding the lack of documentation and transparency in the agreement provided to Council.

4. Resolution No. 16 - A Resolution Awarding a contract to Paycom. ([View](#)) (For Human Resources Information System)  
Introduced by: Betsy Buckingham  
Originator: Business Administration/Human Resources

Resolution No. 16, Session 2026, A Resolution awarding a contract to Paycom for a human resources information system, was introduced by Buckingham, read at length, and on motion of Buckingham, seconded by Washington, Resolution No. 16 came up for discussion.

Human Resources Director Beth Bowman and Mayor Sandie Walker explained that the city's current administrative state is highly inefficient. Director Bowman presented a diagram to Council illustrating the chaotic nature of their existing processes, which rely on six or more disparate platforms to manage time, attendance, learning, policy, and pay. This manual system was described as labor-intensive, prone to error, and a significant risk for compliance issues.

Mayor Walker emphasized that the city is currently behind the eight ball regarding technology. She noted that the new system would bring the city up to modern standards, allowing employees to perform basic tasks such as submitting time directly from their cell phones, a capability they currently lack.

The following information was shared with Council:

- **Cost:** The contract with Paycom is estimated at \$278,549.34.  
**Bids:** The city received 10 bids for the project, with prices ranging drastically from \$40,000 to \$1.5 million.
- **Projected Savings:** By consolidating multiple vendors into one platform, the city expects an annual savings of approximately \$200,000.

Councilwoman Johnescu questioned why the price was not included in the resolution text. Assistant Solicitor Flower responded that she advised against including a fixed number because the pricing is based on a unit price per employee, a figure that naturally fluctuates as the city's

workforce changes.

Director Bowman explained that Paycom was selected by a selection panel for its exceptional customer service and "tech-forward" platform. Notably, Paycom is located nearby in Baltimore and takes full responsibility for the implementation of its product. While the city currently uses ADP for payroll, Bowman noted that workforce engagement with that tool is only at 3%, indicating a massive room for improvement that Paycom's interactive demo promised to fix. She said this transition to Paycom was prompted by the fact that the city's current time and attendance system, Kronos, is sunsetting, meaning it will soon go dark and leave the city without a functional platform.

**Vote:** There being no further discussion, Resolution No. 15 PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Bupp, Johnescu, Buckingham, Washington - 4; Nays - Supler - 1. Councilman Supler expressed a preference for the lowest bidder (Paylocity), noting that it was over \$100,000 cheaper than Paycom. He argued that choosing the lower bid would further enhance the city's projected \$200,000 savings and pointed out that Paylocity is also known for being user-friendly and interactive for employees.

#### XI. Requests for Future Meetings

#### XII. Council Comment

President Washington addressed the ongoing concerns of the immigrant community by revisiting the Trust Act, which she noted was originally passed by Council in 2024. She explained that the act, which was designed to provide specific protections for York's immigrant residents, was vetoed by the previous administration (Mayor Helfrich) in 2025, and a subsequent attempt to override that veto failed. Washington expressed her strong hope that she could work collaboratively with her current colleagues on Council and the Walker administration to finally address these imperative needs in the future.

Councilman Supler spoke about a ransomware attack on city government that had been highlighted in the media. He emphasized the need for continued transparency from the city to ensure residents remain informed and feel secure regarding the city's digital infrastructure. Additionally, he continued to advocate for residents living near Banz Park, raising concerns about encampments along the creek and calling for thoughtful and compassionate care to address the situation. Supler also proposed improving financial transparency by suggesting the city adopt a more accessible reporting platform similar to the one used by the local school district, which provides monthly documentation on receipts and disbursements to strengthen public trust. On a legislative note, he shared that his proposal regarding bias-motivated conduct was recently reviewed by the Human Relations Commission (HRC), which recommended its advancement with some amendments. Finally, he highlighted local successes, such as Hamir's Restaurant being named to a national "restaurants of the year" list and encouraged residents to attend "Coffee with a Cop" events to build community trust.

Councilwoman Bupp thanked Michael Walker for his earlier public testimony regarding the professional background of Michael Doweary. She admitted that when she made comments during a previous meeting, she was unaware that Mr. Doweary held a formal role within the administration. However, she reiterated her stance that the city specifically needs personnel with municipal accounting experience, noting that it differs significantly from standard accounting. Bupp also commended the HR team for posting the Business Administrator job opening and encouraged qualified individuals to check the city's employment page. Regarding financial oversight, she expressed an interest in receiving updated ARPA balance reports. She noted that the last report Council received was dated August 31, 2025, at which time \$13 million remained to be spent, and she looks forward to seeing current figures as soon as they are made available.

XIII. Administration Comment

Mayor Walker announced the completion and delivery of a written monthly financial report for January 2026. She emphasized the historic nature of this document, stating that in her eight years of service on the Council and her time as Mayor, this was the first report of its kind presented in decades. She characterized the report as a vital step toward increasing transparency and accountability within the city government. The Mayor specifically commended the finance department for preparing the document while navigating a period of significant transition and the ongoing search for a permanent Business Administrator. She requested that Council members review the format and provide feedback or suggested improvements to ensure the reports meet their expectations for clarity and detail.

Mayor Walker then introduced David Mackereth as her new Chief of Staff.

Mr. Mackereth shared his professional background, which includes extensive work within Pennsylvania state government, including roles with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Administration, and the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. He also worked in the private sector in a family-owned businesses and, most recently, a position at a global company located in York. He informed the Council that he would serve as their primary point of contact for administrative matters and expressed his desire to help execute Mayor Walker's vision for the city.

Finally, Mayor Walker presented a brochure titled "6 in 26," which serves as a visual guide to her 2026 initiatives. She said this document outlines the administration's key priorities and strategic goals for the remainder of the year.

- XIV. Adjournment: There being no further business, the February 17, 2026 meeting of Council adjourned at 7:29 p.m.
- XV. Resumption of Public Comment Period (at the discretion of the presiding officer): None

  
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Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk

  
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Edquina Washington, President of Council