

Donchez for Mayor

Mayor Bob Donchez

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Announcement of Candidacy for Mayor

Bethlehem Mayor Robert J. Donchez today announces that he will be a candidate for re-election as Mayor in the May 15, 2017 primary election and releases the following statement.

In announcing my candidacy for re-election, I seek to continue my lifetime commitment to the City of Bethlehem and my service as mayor for a second four year term. If re-elected, my continued focus will be on:

- Fiscal Responsibility
- Public Safety
- Economic Development
- Strong Neighborhoods
- Openness in Government
- Improving the business districts
- Improving recreational facilities and
- Increasing the street overlay programs.

During the past 3.5 years, with great discipline, and working with City Council, difficult decisions were made to deal with the City's financial outlook. These decisions have succeeded with good and stable budgeting, which was in serious need at the outset of my term. This led directly to improvement of the City's bond rating. We have progressed from "BBB with a positive outlook" to "A- with a positive outlook" and increased the City's cash balance.

Bethlehem continues to be one of the safest cities in Pennsylvania. The implementation of the beat officer, increased patrols, partnerships with Lehigh University, Moravian College and the Bethlehem Sands Casino have proven to be effective.

Currently, my administration is in the process of working closely with Northampton County on consolidation of our 911 Emergency Communication Center as mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

To complement my Administration's implementation of Text 911, I recently instructed our new 911 Director Bob Novatnack to determine the feasibility of incorporating a 311 system into our communication system. This would provide our residents with one central number to call and report non-emergency issues. This would improve efficiency, accountability and resident service.

Bethlehem continues to be business friendly. During the past 3.5 years, the City has continued to see growth in small businesses and continued development on the former Bethlehem Steel property known as LVIP 7 and Majestic Realty.

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With recent changes by the State Legislator regarding the CRIZ legislation, the City has begun to see new development especially in South Bethlehem (i.e. Greenway Commons, Benner project).

My Administration will continue to be aggressive in strict Code Enforcement and will continue to take action against owners of blighted properties.

This year, I allocated \$500,000.00 for the city to acquire blighted properties and get them rehabilitated so adjoining property owners can see their property values increase.

In a notable example of my Administration's aggressive stance against blight, recently, the Court of Northampton County ruled in the City's favor in awarding the City conservatorship of a prominent blighted property. This decision was well received and the City will continue to be aggressive in citing property owners who let their property deteriorate.

Three and a half years ago, I pledged that I would have an Open Door Policy, one day each month, for citizens to come to City Hall with no appointment to discuss their concerns with me. I am proud to say over 200 residents have taken advantage of this initiative. In addition, I have conducted nine walking tours throughout our City, followed by neighborhood meetings.

Both initiatives have been successful and met with great success. In addition, the City has distributed over 1000 smoke detectors and many home owners have improved their properties.

I also initiated an Administrative Gift Policy restricting City employees from accepting free meals, gifts or tickets to any events. I strongly believe this Policy is the right policy for everyone who works for the City of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem, through its rich history continues to be a great place to live, work and raise a family. Public Safety, Recreational Facilities, Strong Neighborhoods and Quality of Life issues are important reason why families and businesses want to locate in our City.

Last year, *Money Magazine*, named Bethlehem "The Best City to Retire in the Northeast." And in 2015 The *Huffington Post* recognized Bethlehem as being one of "The 10 Most Beautiful US Towns to Visit in the Fall."

This year, the City is in the process of conducting a comprehensive study on our recreational facilities. The results will be made public shortly, and I will ask for public input based on the Report's recommendations.

Thanks to financial support from St. Lukes' University Health Network, the City recently adopted a Bike Share program with locations on the north side and south side of our City.

Improved partnerships with Lehigh University, Moravian College, Northampton Community College, Bethlehem Area School District, St. Luke's University Health Network and Lehigh Valley Health Network have provided additional funds and programs for our residents. Some of these partnership programs are: South Side Ambassadors, Mounted Police Unit, Bike Police Officers, School Resource Officers and Housing Inspector.

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I believe that Bethlehem has made great progress under my Administration. But, there is so much more to do to continue to keep moving our City forward.

I respectfully ask the Citizens of Bethlehem to review my record; and that you share my belief that my record is strong. I believe it justifies my humbly seeking for your support for another four years to serve as Bethlehem's mayor.



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