

FIRST ANNUAL MESSAGE
OF MAYOR
JAMES M. YEAKLE
AND STATEMENTS OF
RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES
OF THE
CITY OF BETHLEHEM, PA.
INCLUDING
REPORTS OF SUPERINTENDENTS
OF THE
VARIOUS CITY DEPARTMENTS
AND STATESMENTS OF THE
FUNDING AND FLOATING INDEBTEDNESS
SCHEDULE OF ASSETS AND
ASSESSED VALUATION OF TAXABLE PROPERT

JANUARY, 1922

FIRST ANNUAL MESSAGE

January 2nd, 1922

*To the Honorable Members of City Council and
The Citizens of Bethlehem:*

In compliance with Section I of Article VII of the Act of June 27th, 1913, I herewith submit my first annual message as Mayor of the City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

I am doing so with a consciousness that whatever success will attend our efforts in administering the affairs of our City – a task which the electors of our City have seen fit to assign to us, – will depend largely upon how well we lay the foundation for our future actions, and having taken the initial steps properly, with a due regard for the most urgent needs of the community, and the possibility of successfully consummating our proposed acts, in view of existing conditions and circumstances, how well we execute our plans, and with the sincere and hearty co-operation of our citizens, build the super structure which we propose to erect upon the foundations so laid.

In linking the co-operation of our citizens with our efforts, I am acting advisedly for the reason that I am firmly of the opinion that no municipal administration can successfully function without the support of the citizens whose servants we are – a fact of which we should never become unmindful – and their hearty and earnest co-operation, indicative of their approval, with us in all our efforts.

We must appeal for such support; we must take the taxpayers into our confidence and indicate to them through a system of publicity that we desire to keep them advised of what we are doing in their behalf in order that they may guide our actions and give us their active counsel and assistance. The will of the taxpayers should guide us in all our actions and there is no more positive way of feeling the temper of the public than through publicity and in order that we may not go amiss in our efforts to serve the taxpayers according to their wishes, thereby securing their active co-operation and approval, I would urge upon the heads of all Departments the importance of giving the widest publicity to all municipal business.

There is no occasion for secretiveness in the transaction of public business. The temporary withholding of information in the interest of the public welfare may on rare occasions be justified in order to permit the perfection of plans or the consummation of some act which might otherwise run amiss or fail entirely, but as a general rule publicity is not only desirable but actually necessary. The citizens have a just right to know their business and it is the duty of Council to keep them informed. Secretiveness excited suspicion and there is nothing that can undermine confidence with more speed than suspicion, whether justified or not. Public confidence is the greatest asset of any municipal governing body and must be maintained at all

times in order to insure a successful administration. Let us by our actions earnestly strive to maintain the public confidence and through it the co-operation and respect of our citizens.

In assuming our duties let us however not be unmindful of the difficult tasks with which we will be obliged to deal. They are serious and will require our best efforts for their solution. There are conditions confronting us at this time that are abnormal and almost insurmountable. These we dare not ignore and if the handicap which they create is to be successfully combatted we must unite in much sober and serious thought for the public welfare without delay.

I wish to call attention to the present financial conditions confronting this Council before attempting to make any specific references to the operations which should be undertaken by the various Departments of Council. It is essential that this should be done and that our citizens may know, and possessing the necessary knowledge, will not expect Council to continue to make public improvements, on the extensive scale of the past few years. However, much such improvements may be desired, the finances of the City are in such shape that Council will be unable to undertake any large improvements at this time, and following what appears to be the trend of times in all municipalities, Council must demand a curtailment of expenditures to a point consistent with the City's present financial condition and the estimated yearly revenues.

During the past several years extensive improvements have been made in our City. These improvements consisting of new streets, sewers, lighting facilities, etc., have been made at a cost greatly in excess of current revenues received. To meet the obligations incurred, for the making of these improvements, it became necessary to borrow large sums of money on the credit of the City. The moneys so borrowed, together with the amount of approximately \$500,000.00 allocated and to be allocated by the Public Service Commission as the City's share of the cost of the construction of the Hill-to-Hill Bridge, has practically exhausted the power of Council to borrow of its own initiative with the Two (2) per centum limitation of the assessed valuation of taxable property established by law; therefore, whatever improvements are to be made during the present fiscal year, must of necessity be paid for out of the current revenues so far as these revenues will not be required for the ordinary and annually recurring administration expenses, interest on indebtedness and amortization charges. These latter items, owing to the amount of the presently existing debt, both bonded and floating, are extremely high at this time and there is a serious doubt in my mind whether any permanent improvements of consequence can be undertaken in the near future.

In order that all possible surplus revenues may be made available for the maintenance of permanent improvements already made, and the construction of new improvements, the heads of all Departments are urged to so operate the various Bureaus under their control as not to exceed the appropriations allowed them by Council.

A large portion of the debt created by the former Councils under the two (2) per cent, limitation has been borrowed from the various banks of the City on promissory notes bearing six

(6) per cent interest. All these outstanding notes, so far as they represent the City's portion of the work performed, should be refunded through a bond issue at a lower rate of interest thereby reducing expenses and eliminating much unnecessary administrative work. I therefore recommend that Council give this important question due consideration at an early date.

Although as above pointed out all work that is done or improvements that are to be made during the coming year must be paid for out of current revenues, nevertheless I fully realize that the City is in need of many improvements, some of which can and should be made this year; improvements that can not be made from current funds this year should be given careful and thoughtful consideration and plans prepared to put them into effect as soon as the finances of the City will warrant.

Among the many important matters demanding early consideration the following are paramount and should receive Council's first consideration: -

- (A)– The improvement of our water supply and distribution system.
- (B)– The installation of a modern comprehensive Fire and Police Alarm System.
- (C)– The construction of a proper Garbage disposal plant.
- (D)– The furnishing of better lighting facilities particularly in the outlying districts.
- (E) – The continuation of the installation of the comprehensive sewer system which was begun during the past year.

The portion of territory belonging to the City and lying north of Elizabeth Avenue is at the present time not supplied with any Fire Alarm System. As this is a thickly populated territory, at least six (6) new fire alarm boxes should be installed in this section of the City during the coming year, and the sooner this is done the better it will be for the community. The homes of the City are the source of most of the City's revenues and therefore no expense should be spared in supplying adequate fire protection to safeguard them from serious conflagration. Without homes there can be no revenues and without revenues there can be no City.

The method employed presently for the disposal of Garbage by digging trenches and burying the Garbage therein is crude but nevertheless safe. Although this method of disposal has been approved of by the State authorities, it cannot be continued for a much longer period than the coming year, due to the fact that in my opinion the present dumping grounds will be filled. In view of these conditions Council must seriously consider the Garbage disposal question at an early date and provide funds for the construction of at least one incinerating plant to be built on the North side of the river and one to be built on the South side of the river. It is the plain duty of Council to safeguard the public health at all times and there is no way in which this can be done more effectively than by seeing to it that the City's refuse and Garbage is properly disposed of.

The outlying districts of the City should receive every reasonable consideration. Streets should be placed into passable condition and thus maintained. Lights should be installed wherever reasonably necessary. So far as reasonably feasible, fire and police facilities should

also be accorded these districts. They are entitled to every reasonable consideration their isolated location demands.

A bountiful supply of water to supply all of our citizens is essential to the prosperity, health and comfort of our community. The Borough of Bethlehem was a pioneer in furnishing a pumped supply of water from the flowing springs, to its citizens not only for household use but also for fire protection. The Borough of South Bethlehem was in later years fortunate in being supplied from a treated water supply. These systems of water supply have grown and in keeping with the progress of our community have been recently merged into one system for our needs. The many steps which have marked our progress in this great essential of life, have culminated in producing a standard of service for our consumers unexcelled by any other water company.

There remain for solution at this time, however, two important problems of service which it is hoped, will receive the early consideration of our citizens and City Council. There are many houses on the hillsides of the South Side of the river which due to their location above the water line of our reservoirs cannot receive water from the municipal supply. In the majority of cases these houses do not have any direct sources of supply and are absolutely without water. Much thought and attention has been given to these questions by the water Bureau in an endeavor to find ways and means by which pure water can be furnished to these unfortunate citizens for domestic use as well as for the adequate protection of their homes against fire.

The solution of the problems seems to lay in the installation of a separate high pressure water system to furnish water to the high ground that fringes South Mountain. This can readily be done by the installation of pumps at our reservoirs and pumping the pure water from the clear water basin to a stand pipe to be erected upon higher ground. From a standpipe a new main could then be laid along South Mountain to supply the district which is now without an adequate supply. This high pressure line would serve a two fold purpose in as much as it could be connected at suitable points with the water mains that serve the downtown mercantile and business district thus not only serving that section which is now without water, but also increasing the supply and pressure of water for fire protection at other critical points on the South Side.

The benefits resulting from the installation of such a system may be summed up as follows: -

1. – It would supply pure water to many citizens who are now without a water supply.
2. – It would furnish adequate fire protection to the homes of the people in the same district.
3. – It would increase pressure and supply during times of fire in our business and mercantile district on the South Side.
4. – It would cause a decrease in fire insurance rates in all districts affected thereby.
5. – It would make available for home developments large areas upon the hillsides which now cannot be developed owing to the lack of proper water facilities.

Surely with so many advantages to be secured through such an installation, it should be undertaken not only as a practical and economic move but as an improvement which, if consummated, would receive the approval of all of our citizens.

All employees of the City should receive a fair and just remuneration for efficient services rendered and I am therefore not in favor of reducing salaries and wages at this time. It is false economy to replace efficient employees by other who are inefficient simply because the new employees are willing to work for less salary than those removed. As a general rule those who engage their services for less money are not worth as much as they are willing to accept, due to their inefficiency. Such employees invariably become more expensive in the end as they, not being efficient, are unable to perform the duties assigned to them thereby necessitating the employment of additional help to carry on the work which the higher salaries and more efficient will readily perform unassisted. It is the duty of the head of each Department as well as the head of the various Bureaus of the City Government to see that our citizens and taxpayers receive salaries from all employees commensurate with the salaries and wages paid for efficient services.

It is very apparent that we should have more industries in our City. Diversified industrial enterprises spell progress for any community. I would therefore suggest that we, the representatives of the citizens, together with the various other organizations interested in matters of this kind and the citizens in general, use every honorable means at our command to encourage the locations of more new industries in our City, and with this end in view I would recommend that this Council at an early date take the necessary action and place itself on record to this effect, that, for a period of at least (5) years all new industries locating in our City will be taxed as low as the law will permit.

In conclusion I wish to ask for the hearty co-operation and support of the members of Council in the transaction of the people's business during the year. No municipality can progress where there is lack of harmony and co-operation in the governing body. There is no reason why there should not be full harmony in Council. We are all interested in the best welfare of the City. We all wish to see it progress and grow. This being the case we should all be in favor of any measure designed for public good regardless of its source; and we should all be opposed to those measures which we feel will not operate thus.

If we will all earnestly strive to do our utmost in furthering the best interests of the city wherever and whenever possible, we can not help but have the satisfaction of knowing and feeling that we have done our full duty toward our constituents and aided in rearing a bigger and better Bethlehem.

JAMES M. YEAKLE, *Mayor*.