

Youth Commission
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
Virtually
6:00 pm

Members Present — A. Ramirez, Z. Febres, M. Tavarez

Others Present – S. Smith, J. Baez

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Ms. Tavarez. She stated that a quorum is not present.

Ms. Smith welcomed Mr. Baez and all present introduced themselves.

Mr. Baez stated that he also works with Rep. Cepeda-Freytiz's Youth Council. He noted his hope that the Youth Council and Youth Commission could work together. He stated that he is glad that there is a wide range of ages of members and stated that he is excited to work with the Youth Commission.

Ms. Tavarez questioned how Mr. Baez would assist the Youth Commission. Mr. Baez stated that he hopes to identify where he can help make improvements. He noted the need to work towards reaching meeting quorum. He described how City Council leans on its staff to help get things done.

Mr. Baez questioned how he can help the Commission. Ms. Tavarez stated that members are always trying to recruit new members. She stated that many people seem interested but then don't follow through. She stated that she has tried working with RHS but has been unsuccessful. She stated that there is a recruitment video on the Youth Commission's page of the City website.

Mr. Baez stated that staff can work with IT and the Communications Coordinator to update the video. He noted that the Commission helps to strengthen the voices of City youth and can advise City leaders. He stated that this will help shape Reading's future.

Ms. Smith stated that she has worked with the Communications Coordinator and he is ready to help film when the Commission is ready to move forward. She suggested that Ms. Tavarez share the video on the Commission's Instagram.

Mr. Baez questioned whether members have Youth Commission tee shirts. Ms. Smith stated that shirts had been ordered in the past and she has a few in stock. She stated that another order can be placed.

Mr. Baez questioned whether meetings were ever held in person. Ms. Tavaréz stated that meetings had been held in person and that members regularly saw each other in school. She stated that schedules are very different now and meeting virtually accommodates as many schedules as possible.

Mr. Baez noted the need for members to work on their time management skills.

Ms. Smith stated that she had hoped that keeping a consistent meeting schedule would help increase meeting attendance. She stated that meeting in person can be difficult as not all members have transportation.

Mr. Febres stated that he has a potential new member who lives in Kutztown but goes to college in Reading. He asked if this person could join. Ms. Smith stated that if the person lived on campus they could join. She stated that she is unsure about membership if they commute.

Mr. Baez stated that if the Commission feels this is appropriate, the ordinance can be amended to allow it. Ms. Tavaréz stated that she will keep this in mind. She stated that when she made the Youth Commission's report to City Council, it was recommended that recruitment occur through RHS clubs. Ms. Smith stated that several members of the Knights of Social Justice club did apply. She stated that she will review the applications to see if these members have engaged.

Mr. Baez explained that he and Ms. Smith can use their networks to introduce Youth Commission members to the community. He stated that introductory emails can be sent so that Youth Commission members get follow through. Ms. Tavaréz stated that this would be very helpful.

Ms. Ramirez stated that she is currently interning at BCTV. She suggested targeting 15 and 16 year olds so that they can commit to a full term before leaving for college. Mr. Baez agreed with this approach. He stated that the Youth Council also recruits in this manner. He stated that the Youth Council also has voting and non-voting members and suggested that the Youth Commission also consider this.

Mr. Febres suggested that members of the Commission who are college students

may get credit for their service. Mr. Baez stated that he is unsure how to go about this but stated that members can be issued commendations that would show the amount of time that was spent in service. Ms. Smith stated that she has also signed high school volunteer hour requirements.

Mr. Baez noted the need to build momentum.

Ms. Tavaréz stated that there is a lot of activity in the group chat.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Smith reported that City Council approved the Youth Commission's 2026 budget request of \$10,000.

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

None.

RECRUITMENT VIDEO UPDATE

Ms. Tavaréz stated that she reviewed the current video and that no new content is needed at this time.

EVENT PLANNING

- Joint Event with YMCA

Ms. Tavaréz stated that the YMCA has been unresponsive but that she will follow up. Ms. Smith will also follow up.

- Earth Day

Ms. Smith questioned if the Commission would participate again this year. Ms. Tavaréz requested that Ms. Smith register the group. She stated that this is a fun event and the Youth Commission has table games and awards prizes. She stated that they also try to recruit new members.

- Bear Creek Snow Tubing

Ms. Tavaréz stated that the event has been rescheduled due to the weather. She stated that it will now be held on February 21 from 3-5 pm.

Ms. Ramirez disconnected from the meeting at this time.

Ms. Smith requested the number of attendees by Monday so that she can make the arrangements. Ms. Tavaréz stated that she will provide several items that are needed from Amazon.

OLD BUSINESS

- Adopt-a-Block

Ms. Tavaréz stated that cleanups have been difficult due to the snow. She questioned why the Youth Commission doesn't have an adopt-a-block sign. Ms. Smith stated that she will follow up about the sign.

- Marketability of Downtown Housing

Members in attendance stated that they had no other recommendations at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

- Berks Youth Violence Prevention (BYVP)

Mr. Febres stated that he attended the recent meeting and stated that Ms. Garcia would like to collaborate with the Youth Commission. He stated that BYVP is holding a Youth Summit at Penn State Berks and Youth Advocacy Day in Harrisburg. Ms. Smith stated that she has some information about these events and will forward it to the group.

Ms. Tavaréz expressed the belief that Ms. Garcia is an amazing person who does a lot for the community. She expressed the belief that it would be great to collaborate with BYVP. She stated that she participated in Youth Advocacy Day in the past and was able to meet Rep. Cepeda-Freytiz.

Ms. Tavaréz questioned the Youth Summit. Mr. Febres stated that it appears to be a lecture series on many topics along with a celebration. He stated that it is a full day of youth teaching youth and expressed the belief that it is mainly for high school students. He stated that Ms. Garcia needs people to lead the sessions.

Mr. Baez stated that the Youth Council will also be attending Youth Advocacy Day. He stated that the House and Senate are both in session that day and it would be great to do this event together.

NEXT MEETING

Ms. Smith stated that she has a conflict for the March meeting. She stated that she is flexible to reschedule or to meet in person which would allow her to attend both events.

Mr. Baez suggested adjusting the meeting time.

Ms. Tavaréz stated that she will start a discussion about this in the group chat. Ms. Smith noted the need for the information at least a week before the new meeting date so that she can re-advertise.

The next meeting of the Youth Commission is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, March 4 at 6 pm via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 7:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk