

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2022**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, December 6, 2022 in Council Chambers and via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m.

Silent Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance: A silent moment was taken followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Barletta-present; Colombo-present; Mundie-present; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the November 22, 2022 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): None

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

BUDGET ORDINANCE 2022-16

An Ordinance Providing for the Appropriation of Specific Amounts Estimated as Required for the Various Departments of the Government of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania for and during the Fiscal Year, dating from January 1, 2023 and Ending December 31, 2023 **(1ST READING)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Perry stated there is an increase of the Building and Permits Line Item in the 2023 budget. Lynch said this is based on estimations from the Planning and Zoning Departments. Perry asked if this includes the "North Point one". Lynch said he does not think so because it is stuff they perceived to be imminent. Perry asked if this would be an additional amount of money. Lynch said right. Mayor Cusat (*inaudible*). Perry asked if the City

Parking revenue is the same as it was. Perry said the City is getting \$12,000 from renting out the “annex”. He asked if it is rented out, if the City would get more. Mayor Cusat said no. He asked if North Point decided to take the City’s LERTA. He asked if there would be additional fees. Lynch stated if they would enter into a pilot program.

He said there is one entity that is not entered into a pilot program. Perry asked if this is the Hazleton Housing Authority. Lynch said yes. Perry stated the Hazleton Police overtime year-to-date is low. Perry spoke of the City parking meters. He said the City is proposing \$125,000 in the budget. He said monthly parking permits is about \$60,000. He asked if they expect more from the new parking meters in the City. Mayor Cusat (*inaudible*). Perry said the OPEB benefits, in the budget, are \$895,000. Perry said the City’s single audit is budgeted for \$35,000, but will have a new auditor coming in to do some new audits for the City. Perry spoke of the Hazleton Municipal Airport Line Item. He said the fuel sales for the jets, are, currently, astronomical. Barletta asked why there is a big increase in the fuel jet sales. Lynch stated it “goes back” to when the runway was extended. He said one plane could take as much as they sold in one week with bigger jets. Mayor Cusat (*inaudible*). Ondishin stated he does not see how the fuel sales could be that much as compared to 2022. He said he is “up there” a lot. Lynch said this 2023 budget is almost identical to year 2022 budget. He stated the City sat down with the Hazleton Municipal Airport representatives to get a more realistic “picture” of their budget. Ondishin said there is a lot of plane traffic during the day. Lynch said the City does not handle the day-to-day airport operations. Ondishin said he wants to go over this at another time. Perry said the salary budgeted for the Hazleton Airport Manager was \$35,000 but now budgeted for \$57,000. Lynch said the Hazleton Airport Manager was a member of the union working up there but was hired for the City as the manager at a higher salary. Perry stated there is \$10,000 budgeted for the Hazleton Airport employees’ overtime. Lynch said some of this is for a balance budget and does not think they spend this. Ondishin asked if the helicopters take jet fuel. Lynch said he guesses. Mayor Cusat said (*inaudible*).

Barletta spoke of the City Solicitor Line Item. She asked what the Special Legal Services line item is for. Lynch stated this would be for if the City was sued, in a lawsuit, and retains an attorney, through a lawsuit, the City has a deductible of \$25,000. Lynch stated as the City is paying these bills, this is attributed to Special Legal Services. He said if there are services not from the City solicitor, a labor attorney, this is included in Special Legal Services. Barletta said in 2021, the City spent \$55,000 but, currently, raising it up to \$85,000 now. Lynch stated the City has a number of lawsuits. Barletta asked if it is labor issues. Lynch said the City is spending more, each year, on Special Legal Services. Barletta asked if any Hazleton Police or Fire contracts are coming up Mayor Cusat said these are all done. Barletta asked why the Contracted Services Line Item was so high. She said in 2021, it was at \$31,000 but, currently, anticipated \$11,000. Lynch said the City stopped using a third-party cleaning service to clean the buildings.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1st READING

Ordinance 2022-17

Re-Enacting Ordinance 1931 which Continues in Force and Effect for the Period January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, Imposing the Real Estate Transfer Tax (**1st READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Perry.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon stated everything is staying the same with the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1st READING

Ordinance 2022-18

An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton Fixing the Tax Rate of Real Estate Located in the City of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, for All City Purposes for the Fiscal Year 2023, Beginning January 1, 2023 and Ending December 31, 2023 **(1st READING)**

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Perry said when debt services is close to recreation services, it is pretty good. Perry stated nothing is changing. He said this budget was pretty good the past few years even though PEL expected to be 1 to 2 mills. Perry said the public should be happy with this. He thanked Mayor Cusat and Lynch for their work.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1st READING

Ordinance 2022-19

Re-Enacting Ordinance 2021-24 which Continues in Force and Effect for the Period January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, Imposing the Payroll Preparation Tax for the City of Hazleton **(1st READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Barletta asked how this turned out in the first year. Lynch said the City is at \$354,000 with a budget of \$460,000. He said the City is doing better than the City of Scranton as far as the pay rates. He said the City is working on letters "going out" to delinquent payers.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES 4-1 ON 1ST READING

(2ND AND 3RD READINGS)

Ordinance 2022-13

An Ordinance Amending the City of Hazleton Zoning Ordinance **(2nd READING)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon stated the City still needs to have a public hearing on this. He asked city council to table this ordinance. Atty. Logsdon stated next meeting, they will have an advertised public meeting and will provide all

comments, to city council, on this.

MOTION TO TABLE:

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE TABLED

Ordinance 2022-14

An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Amending Part II, CHAPTER 490, Taxation, of the City's Code of Ordinances by Amending Article XIII, Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance; Repealing Prior Inconsistent Ordinances and Part of Ordinances; Providing for a Severability Clause; and Containing an Effective Date **(2nd READING)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Ondishin.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Ordinance 2022-15

An Ordinance Authorizing the Vacation of a Portion of an Unnamed "Paper Street" off of Branch Court in the City of Hazleton **(2nd READING)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2022-79

A Resolution Requesting Local Share Account Funds for the Dominican House "La Casa Dominicana De Hazleton"

MOTION TO TABLE:

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION TABLED

New Business: None.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: Ricky DeLucca, Hazleton, asked if the City has figured out anything with Paul's Towing. Atty. Logsdon asked, "specifically, what are you talking about"? DeLucca said, specifically, his drivers and felonies. He said the paperwork was distributed to Atty. Logsdon and all city council members. Atty. Logsdon said, "the same answer he gave DeLucca at the last meeting". He stated he gave the information to the people, internally, to look into this. DeLucca said if the City wants to save money in their lawsuits, they need to stop giving and passing illegal contracts. DeLucca stated the only people making money are Karpowich Law Firm. Lynch said this is not correct. He asked Lynch if he is getting any "kickbacks". Lynch said no, he is not getting any kickbacks. He said when the City gets sued, the City's carrier assigns a law firm and this is the firm that would be paid, those bills, for the deductible.

DeLucca stated there was a recent incident with Frankie Vito. He said Mayor Cusat had a meeting, one week prior, with the public workers, and told them not to yell at anybody. He asked if charges would be filed against Vito, for what he did to Mario. Atty. Logsdon said the City does not comment on personnel matters.

Cindee DeLucca, Hazleton, asked if the City has another City solicitor besides Atty. Logsdon. She said every time she makes a right-to-know request, it goes to him and another lawyer at his law firm. Atty. Logsdon asked if she was referring to another lawyer in his firm. DeLucca said she does not know, will look up the email after the meeting. She asked if Atty. Logsdon is the only one who represents the City. Atty. Logsdon said no, if it is another lawyer, it would be an attorney in his office. DeLucca asked Atty. Logsdon if it is only him that represents the City. Atty. Logsdon said no, the law firm represents the City.

Comments from Mayor: Mayor Cusat said the City Hall Christmas lighting event will be held on December 7, starting at 4 p.m. at the library, with tree lighting at 5:30 p.m.

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if there are many complaints in the City's street lights. Mayor Cusat said the complaints are given to the Department of Public Works and "go back" to Smart Watt to replace the lights. Ondishin stated there are a lot of streetlights still out. He said Broad and Poplar Streets lights are out. He asked about the Buttonwood Street project. Mayor Cusat stated

UGI is scheduled to "rip up" Buttonwood Street. He said the plan is to do the entire road, from Poplar to Church Streets with the sewer going "across".

Colombo said he received telephone calls that the water problems have been fixed on Johns Avenue. Barletta said they contacted the Code Department, and they instantly got back to them. Perry, also, commended all the City departments for doing a good job. He stated the Christmas lights look nice at City Hall. Perry said the City has a new speed message sign in front of City Hall. Barletta asked where the City purchased them from. Mayor Cusat stated he got them by Penn State University in State College. Perry asked how many the City has. Mayor Cusat said a total of three, with two being placed on 15th Street. Barletta asked if the City used ARP money for this. Mayor Cusat said he believes the City used the money from the HCA. Perry asked if these will be more permanent. Mayor Cusat said yes. Perry said the City needs to slow people down, going east and west on 15th Street, with the speed signs.

Comments from Junior Council: None

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.