

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026**

**Call to Order:** Council met at a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

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

**Roll Call:** Bruno-present; Colombo-present; Nilles-present; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:** The minutes of March 10, 2026, Regular & WORK SESSION Meetings were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None**

**Bid Opening: None**

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** *Dee Deakos, 43 Mine Street, Hazleton, spoke of Ordinance 2026-21-* A Resolution Authorizing the Award of Contract for the City View Park Imagination Playground Site Work Project. She noticed that the resolution mentions landscaping, but asked if the playground equipment is included in the project fees. Deakos asked if the funds were coming out of the General Fund. She asked how much money is left from the funds. Perry said Deako's questions would be answered when Ordinance 2026-21 was discussed.

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**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

**ORDINANCES:**

**(1<sup>ST</sup> READING)**

**Ordinance 2026-7**

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton  
**(1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon discussed all the amendments, including Land Bank Board of Directors positions, City parking garage and parking lots, and Subdivision and Land Development.

For the Administrative Adjudication of Parking Violations, the City will establish an administrative hearing process for adjudication of parking violations. A person cited may request a hearing before a designated Hearing Officer. Atty. Logsdon stated City Council will be appointing an Administrative Hearing Board. This process will be kept "in house".

The LERTA Ordinance will be changed. The amendments include no less than 100 jobs and the expenditure is no less than \$20,000.000.

The zoning amendments include overlay districts with off-street residential parking and commercial parking lots, tattoo and body piercings, converting buildings into dwellings, retail sales, recreational vehicle storage and parking, minimum parking requirements, and adjustment to the fee schedule for the ATV Board of Appeals meetings.

Colombo asked who the Hearing Officer would be to hear about parking violations. Atty.

Logsdon said City Council would be appointing a Hearing Board.

Perry asked if the City could ask the companies to give money "up front" for LERTA. Mayor Cusat said no other requirements were changed in the ordinance regarding the options to pay by the scale or the lump sum "up front". There are two options: 300% "up front" with 10 years free or the "scale".

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

### **ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1<sup>st</sup> READING**

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### **(2<sup>ND</sup> READINGS)**

**Ordinance 2026-3**      An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton Amending Ordinance 2026-1  
**(2<sup>nd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon stated this ordinance corrects the previous ordinance. The “hatched” area is 0.49 acres.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

### **ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2026-4** An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Chapter 162, Landlord/Tenant Rental Registration (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon stated the City requires a property manager to live within a certain distance to the City. Perry stated this ordinance was introduced by the Code Department.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

### **ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2026-5** An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part II, Chapter 440, Streets and Sidewalks, Article II, Road Cuts; Establishing Regulations Governing the Opening, Excavation, and Restoration of City Streets; Providing for Permit Requirements, Inspections Procedures, Fees, Bonding, Insurance, Restoration Standards, Enforcement and Penalties; and Providing for Repealer, Severability and an Effective Date (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon spoke of the ordinance amendments. In Section 440-50- Restoration Requirements, this puts forth the restoration requirements for pave cuts. In 440-50.1, is the Scheduling Timeline for Pavement Completion. In 440-51- Newly Paved Street Restoration Requirements, this requires the “curb to curb” paving requirements. The City Engineer generated a form that the companies will need to fill out. Perry asked what the timeline is for a newly paved street. Mayor Cusat said six years. Mayor Cusat said every City street cut will have a “unique” number to connect to the City GIS system. Perry stated the City will be paving 1<sup>st</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> Streets this year. Mayor Cusat said some utility companies will mill, cut it, and will pay the cost. He said it will bring money into the City. Mayor Cusat said, in 2027, 12<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup> Streets will be paved.

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Atty. Logsdon said, also, included in the amendments are Scheduling Timeline for Permanent Completion, Special Restoration, and Inspections. The Road Cut ID Marker will, also, identify by colors. From April 1<sup>st</sup>- October 31<sup>st</sup>, the utility company has 90 days from initial cut to make the permanent restoration. There could be emergency cuts between November 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup> but completed within 30 days of the opening of the asphalt plant.

Mayor Cusat said the City is required to have a meeting with the utility companies by April 30<sup>th</sup> of every year.

**MOTION TO AMEND:**

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Colombo

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**MOTION TO AMEND PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY AS AMENDED**

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**Ordinance 2026-6**

An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Chapter 533, Recreational Vehicles and All-Terrain Vehicles, §533-6, Entitled “Hearing;

ATV Board of Appeals, “to provide Compensation for Members of the  
ATV Board of Appeals and its Secretary (2<sup>nd</sup> **READING**)

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon said the City is amending the ordinance creating and redefining the ATV Board for the board members and secretary to be compensated pursuant to the Fee Schedule.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-abstain; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**ORDINANCE PASSES 4-0**

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**RESOLUTIONS:**

**Resolution 2026-21**

A Resolution Authorizing the Award of Contract for the City View Park Imagination Playground Site Work Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

**On the Question:**

Mayor Cusat stated the \$189,218.00 is just for the playground “groundwork”. The funds come from the interest from the City ARPA funds. Mayor Cusat invested in the ARPA money, and the interest accumulated was \$800,000. He said the City received \$150,000 from one entity, and another \$150,000 from another entity for the Phase 1 project.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2026-22**

**A Resolution of the City of Hazleton Authorizing and Approving a Professional Services Agreement with Governmental Consulting Strategies, LLC for Initiative A  
(FIRE PROTECTION AND BACKFLOW PREVENTION PROGRAM)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon stated Mr. Ryba spoke at a previous council meeting, representing Governmental Consulting Strategies, discussing a few of their services. There are no upfront costs to the City. The City retains 70%, and the consultant would retain 30% of the revenue generated. The program will be in effect from April 1, 2026, through June 30, 2029. It is a possible new revenue source, and no taxpayer risk. They will make sure of proper backflow prevention.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-no; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**RESOLUTION PASSES 4-1**

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**Resolution 2026-23**

**A Resolution of the City of Hazleton Authorizing and Approving a Professional Services Agreement with Governmental Consulting Strategies, LLC, for Initiative C (ENERGY SPEND AND UTILITY COST REDUCTION PROGRAM)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon said this contract includes electricity optimization, natural gas savings, negotiating water and sewer costs, energy efficiency improvements, LED lighting upgrades, and boiler upgrades.

Nilles asked if this agreement includes any solar energy. Atty. Logsdon said no. He said smaller solar energy units would not be able to fuel heat City Hall or any City properties.

Atty. Logsdon said there is no financial risk to the City. The contract term would be from April 1, 2026 through June 30, 2029.

Perry asked if this contract would affect the current City energy contract they have through the Hazleton Chamber of Commerce. Atty. Logsdon said this contract would not affect energy contract with the Chamber of Commerce.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-no; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**RESOLUTION PASSES 4-1**

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**Resolution 2026-24**

**A Resolution of the City of Hazleton Adopting the Luzerne County 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon this is for the 2025 Luzerne County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The City has its own emergency management team. The Hazard Mitigation Plan resolution will be shared with the Federal Emergency Management teams, and if the City did not adopt this resolution, the City would not be able to get certain funding. The City adopts Luzerne County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**New Business:** None

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**Old Business:** None

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**Comments from the Audience:** Dr. Robert Childs, City pediatrician, spoke of ICE. He said his interests are social and economic. Childs asked if City Council would be involved in the ICE contract. Atty.

Logsdon said the agreement was signed and gives contractual power to the mayor through the City Code. Childs said the Third-Class City Code states, "any legislation needs to come before City Council for their vote". He is afraid that ICE officials will park outside of the City's popular Latino facilities.

Yesenia Rodriguez, 160 S. Church Street, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. She works for Action Together and In This Together NEPA. Rodriguez said the Hazleton Police Chief, Mayor Cusat and Standard Speaker stated that this agreement would allow local police to take part in ICE operations in serious crimes. She stated the Obama administration ended a 287 (g) task force model program due to civil rights crimes. She said the City cannot forget to recognize what the Barletta administration did.

Bruce Miller, West Diamond Ave., spoke of ICE. He said when the cities do something with ICE, it is going to be controversial. He found out about the ICE agreement in the newspaper. Miller said the police chief signed the contract. The City police will be trained by ICE. He said the City, mayor and police officers could be sued.

Jessica Rodriguez, City of Hazleton Community organizer, spoke of ICE. She asked how the City will not conduct racial profiling under the 287 (g) agreement and how officers will be held, accountable, if a violation would occur. She mentioned a lot of Hispanic businesses would be affected who bring in a lot of revenue into the City.

Mr. Castro, 523 North Laurel Street, spoke of ICE. Castro asked how this agreement aligns with Hazleton's long-term economic and community development goals. How would this police force affect the local workforce and small businesses. Which mechanisms would be in place to prevent racial profiling or abuse. He mentioned the City was sued under the Lou Barletta administration.

Amber Hall, S. Poplar Street, Hazleton, asked if there is still a City tree committee. Nilles said it is hard to find people for the commission. Mayor Cusat stated the Shade Tree Commission is, currently, defunct, because the City could not find 11 people to serve on the commission. He advised Hall to give her information to the City Clerk.

Kim Gormley, 320 West 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. She asked if the police will be put in compromising positions with the ICE program. She said there have been lawsuits, and they are not being published in the press. Gormley said the police officers need to be protected.

Elaine Madden Curry, co-founder of a non-profit in the City, spoke of ICE. Curry stated the City with 60% of Latino's, signed a deal with ICE. The City is the first in Luzerne County to sign the agreement. The ICE agreement was signed by the chief of police, and without a vote from Hazleton City Council. She said the 14-page agreement turns the City police officers into ICE agents. Curry said the local community has come together to create a social infrastructure, has opened many small businesses and has filled manufacturing and warehouses with affordable labor. It allows the police to detain an alien that has not been convicted of a crime. Curry said it has become another divided City.

David Dominquez, 200 East Holly Street, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. He said he lived in the City, since 2005, and has seen more ICE vehicles on the streets in that time. He never dreamed he would see them again. Dominquez said there are business owners that are "appalled" at the 287 (g) agreement. He mentioned most of the City budget goes toward the police budget. Dominquez asked why the City would need to sign the ICE agreement to fund the police department. He requested a town hall with the residents.

Jessie Bender, who lives in surrounding area, spoke of ICE. She spoke of an unarmed resident being shot by ICE five times but survived. This is happening "over and over again" in the cities. Bender said there were priests and veterans shot by ICE. She said ICE has been threatening the people documenting this.

Yulself Sulfaberg, 1034 East Chestnut Street, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. He said he has lived in the City for six years. He stated City Council is the legislative branch, and that this ICE issue should be the City

Council decision. Sulfaberg said ICE is even in charge of airports. He said ICE is supposed to be handling immigration issues, not random searches of people on the streets. He mentioned this decision is an “overreach”.

Falice Childs, 32 West Broad Street, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. She asked City Council members how many ICE programs there are. She said the City signed the ICE agreement to receive \$100,000 for the police department. She asked why the agreement was signed; for safety or the money.

Tony Perzia, Luzerne Borough, spoke of ICE. He said he ran for the Luzerne County Council. He mentioned ICE officers did not swear an oath to the US. Perzia said this is a Gestapo, just like Nazi Germany.

Mark Peterson, Executive Director of Hazleton Art League, spoke of ICE. Peterson said when he was a college student, the City was very different. He said he came to the City with a “vision” for the future. He said if the goal was to divide the City and bring out anti-immigration sentiment, that goal has been met. He stated this is the fastest growing City in PA.

Nate Lee, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. He said if the City resident is a legal citizen, there is nothing to worry about. He said there is nothing wrong with enforcing federal law. He said the Latino’s have saved our City. Lee said 80% of his clients are Latino’s. He said the Italian, Ukrainian, and Slovak immigrants came to the City legally.

John Mertz, 563 Main Street, Sugarloaf, PA, said he is a teacher. He said at the Job Corps, a lot of his students were Haitian’s. He said they were good kids.

Bob Curry, co-founder of the Hazleton Integration Project on 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of ICE. He said this is not a good thing to do and a divisive act. Curry said this is not Hazleton who turned the corner ten years ago.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat said the Easter Bunny Trail is this weekend on March 29<sup>th</sup> at City View Park, from 1–3 p.m.

Mayor Cusat said Tulip Day is on April 11<sup>th</sup> from 11-2 p.m. with 50,000 tulips available. Each participant will receive 10 free tulips. There are only three places in the country that participate in Tulip Day: San Francisco, New York and Hazleton.

Mayor Cusat stated the contractability, under Chapter 11, Section 26, states Council’s contractability is vested in the mayor, and has been done since 1988.

Mayor Cusat said the City has been brought back to life by the Hispanic’s, non-criminal Latino’s. He said he needs to do what is best for the safety of all residents of the City. He mentioned that the City cooperates with the federal government agencies, on a daily basis, with the DEA, federal marshals, FBI, and ICE. He said his intention is to make the residents feel safer with Hazleton law enforcement “on site”. The City police officers need to be trained better on immigration law and receive better equipment.

Police Chief Schoonmaker said there is a lot of “fear mongering” with the ICE program. He said the agreement is acting like a “buffer”. He said the City police officers are already doing this process. The only difference is the City will benefit financially.

**Comments from City Administrator:** Dan Lynch

**Comments from Junior Council:** None

**Comments from Council:** Perry thanked all for voicing their opinions. He stated we have a great community.

Colombo said on March 31<sup>st</sup>, Hazleton Fire Department, Hazleton Helps and Catholic Social Services will be providing meals for the Easter season. He said they will be serving over 700 meals. He said, this Thursday, they will be bringing meals to the United Charities home in West Hazleton.

Colombo thanked Mayor Cusat for the Easter Bunny Trail. He mentioned Tulip Day, last year, was a huge success.

Colombo thanked everyone for coming tonight. He said all citizens are "one".

Nilles said his father, during the Barletta administration, stated the City "cannot do this". He enjoys listening to their comments. He mentioned a town hall could be put together with the police chief. He stated City Council does not have a vote on certain items. He does not know what the training of the officers is.

Perry thanked everyone for coming. He said the changes are only getting better with a diverse community. He said nothing is changing.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.