

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:06 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 May 27, 2025, Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: Presentation of Certificates of Award to Junior Council

Junior Council Members were presented with their certificates by Jim Perry, City Council President.

Bid Opening: None

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

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

None

(2ND READINGS)

None

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2025-21

Resolution Certifying the Local Match for State Operating Financial Assistance for Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Nilles.

On the Question:

Ralph Sharp, Hazleton City Transit Director, stated Luzerne County is giving Hazleton City the local match of \$229,778.00. This certifies that the City is getting money from Luzerne County.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

New Business: Hazleton City Department Managers discussed their overview and general summary of planned work activities for their departments.

1. Dan Lynch, City Administrator, spoke of the City financial department updates. Lynch and Mayor Cusat are looking into a payment system called Repay. He said the City would receive discounts in this system. Lynch said the City could save between \$60,000-\$70,000 per year. Lynch stated the City financial department currently has three "direct" employees, with two part-time employees. He said he will be starting budget talks soon.

Perry asked if the City is looking into purchasing an order system. Lynch said no, it is not software. The company takes over the payment process at a certain point.

Nilles asked where the City is in regard to the audits. Lynch stated the City should be receiving the 2023 audit, digitally, this week. The City 2024 audit will be done in a few months.

Atty. Logsdon stated the City's RFP resolution for auditors will be on the next City Council Meeting agenda.

2. Ali McKittrick, City of Hazleton Recreation Director, stated the City has 16 parks. She said there are birthday parties, Beer & Wine Festivals, Rockin' the Mountain Event, and Lineman Rodeos being held at City View Park. She stated there are outside City groups cleaning up the City parks with clearing, painting and mulching. McKittrick stated she needs more "manpower" to do more projects.

Nilles asked what the cost is to rent a City park for the day. McKittrick said for City View Park, the cost is \$1,000. She said this could be "piece-mealed" out with renting just one pavilion.

Bruno asked if the ice cream stand and miniature golf project is still "in the works". McKittrick stated yes. She stated the City should be starting construction in 2026.

McKittrick stated all recreation forms are on the City's website. She stated the City Recreation Facebook page has grown to 3,000 followers.

3. Frank Stish, City Athletic Director, spoke of the 17th Street playground issue. Stish said a City resident could reserve any City park for free. He said 1 hour could be blocked off for any group. He stated with the City sports leagues, the City needed to obtain insurance. He said any sports league who has a structure, on the City's grounds, is the City's property. Stish said any league could use the structure. He stated All American Softball League refuses to let Strikes & Stripes use their shed and concession stand. Stish built a scheduling application on the City of Hazleton's website.

Perry asked how many pickleball courts are in the City. Stish said the first City event was held this past Saturday at the 17th Street playground. He said there were many sponsors with DPW employees helping to set up. He said there is one court with three groups utilizing the court. Stish said there is another community garden planned for Roosevelt Park in late August. Stish stated there were benches, donated by Giant, that will be placed there.

Stish said the wiffle ball facility is beautiful. He said the City wants to use the community garden to get some interest for the wiffle ball facility. Stish said Amazon, in 2024, has donated basket rims and nets for the playgrounds.

4. Frank Vito, DPW Director, stated DPW has 14 full-time employees, and 2 part-time employees. DPW has 107 miles of roads to cover in the wintertime. In the springtime, the DPW does street sweeping daily. They take care of 11 City playgrounds. They also take care of City Hall, police department, City View Park and Schiavo Park with trimming, cutting and mulching. Vito stated DPW is, currently, performing inlet work. There are 1,400 inlets within the City. The DPW is filling potholes daily. Vito said DPW could perform just about all of the jobs Mayor Cusat gives them.

Vito stated DPW replaces all the streetlights, puts up the Christmas decorations, and flags. If DPW cannot replace a streetlight, then they will have Kucharik come. He said the next job will be cleaning all the camera lenses for the emergency vehicles to go through. Vito stated he could always use a few more workers.

Perry asked how DPW's equipment is. Vito said he is discussing buying a medium-sized dump truck to get through the City side streets.

Bruno asked if the DPW will be paving this year. Vito said all of Buttonwood will be paved, from Poplar to Church Streets, by a private contractor. He said Conahan Drive, and "parts" of Peace and James Streets are "on the list". He said there has been a lot of paving done in the past 5-6 years.

Nilles asked if DPW “contracts out” for stripping Cedar Street. Vito said Josh Esposito, City Engineer, will be placing an RFP for this.

Colombo thanked DPW for placing all American flags and veteran banners.

Colombo asked Vito about re-painting the City crosswalks. Vito said the crosswalks are not included in the RFP. Vito said DPW does all crosswalks at the schools and Diamond Ave., but they do not re-paint the crosswalks on Broad Street. He said Broad Street will be paved this year.

Vito said it is dangerous on Poplar Street with the double-yellow lines. He said PENN DOT needs to correct this issue.

5. Dave Chronowski, Hazleton City Regional Airport, said he worked 24 years at the Wilkes-Barre Airport and four years at the Lehigh Valley Airport. He said when he came into his job, there was a lot of work that needed to be done. He said on the financial side, he has built the budget up \$700,000 plus. He said the airport has updated their ramp project, with new tie-downs, and updated the fuel farm. Chronowski said the airport installed new wildlife fencing. The airport is in the process of updating Mouser lighting for airplane approach lighting with threshold lighting being installed.

Chronowski said the upcoming airport project is a taxi-way project in the spring of 2026.

Perry asked how the airport hangars are doing. Chronowski stated the airport is at 98-100% hangar capacity. He said there were some upgrades done to a few hangars.

Ondishin asked what is going on with the Forestry Department. Chronowski said the Dept. of Forestry owns the land and wants to build a \$5-\$6,000,000 facility. He said when they do their project, they want to tie into the City’s sewer system.

Colombo asked Chronowski about airport fuel sales. Chronowski said when he started, the airport sales were about 30,000 gallons of Jet-A, and 10,000 gallons of AV gas. Currently, the sales are over 100,000 gallons of Jet-A and 20,000 gallons of AV gas. He stated it is mostly corporate jets.

Chronowski said, currently, he has five employees.

Ondishin asked Chronowski if he needs equipment from the City. He said, currently, the airport is good. He said the DPW helps him out with any equipment. They purchased a truck from Atlantic City and one from Lehigh Valley Airport. Chronowski said the airport offers early and late hours.

Chronowski said Hazleton Airport is self-sufficient. Ondishin asked if the City takes any revenue from the airport. Lynch said the City could take reimbursement from payroll.

Colombo asked if there were any events scheduled. Chronowski stated the airport has lost the Collings Foundation contract. He said he is looking into a “flying breakfast” event.

Chronowski said the airport has a good relationship with the new owners of the skydive program.

Colombo asked Chronowski regarding selling the tank at the airport. Chronowski stated it was Mayor Cusat’s initial idea to get rid of the tank. There was someone interested, through Global Maintenance, in the tank. Chronowski stated the City never owned the tank. He said a gentleman who owns a museum will take the tank and refurbish it.

6. Donald Leshko, City of Hazleton Fire Department Chief, stated the MVA’s in the City are “unbelievable”.

Leshko said the fire department has been reminding the City residents to follow the City burning ordinance with outside burning.

Ondishin asked Leshko about the Altamont Building. Leshko said the fire alarms “go off”, but the owners are working with their company to install the fire detectors. He said they had an issue with their elevators, but this has been cleared up.

7. Brian Schoonmaker, City of Hazleton Police Chief, said in the summertime, the call volume increases. He said the police department is still short of officers. He stated they just finished the police civil service testing again. Schoonmaker said if there is a car parked, in the City alleys, they need to call 911.

Colombo asked if the City has a plan if a riot should break out. Schoonmaker said the City has several contingencies plan in place with multiple agencies ready to respond.

8. Ralph Sharp, Hazleton City Parking & Transit Director, said the Hazleton City Transit Authority will have two new CNG buses coming in August. He said there are a few digital signs placed at 15th Street, at the new bus station and at City View Park. Sharp said, every three years, the transit authority has a tri-annual review from the FTA. He said this is the first year the transit authority has no findings.

Sharp said on June 19th, 2025, there is a City program called “Dump the Pump”. He stated City residents could park their cars for the day and could ride the buses for free.

Bruno asked Sharp when he retires the buses if he “sells them off”. He said for diesel buses, the City would “pick them clean”. Sharp said the other buses would go to the junk yard and would get about \$1,000.

Ondishin asked Sharp who does the transit authority maintenance. Sharp stated the City contracts out the bus service. He stated the service has its own mechanic.

Sharp stated there will be a bike lane installed by the new Hazleton City Transit Authority garage.

Old Business: None

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Comments from the Audience: Eugenio Sosa, 140 North Laurel Street, Hazleton, said he is a City real estate agent. He thanked Mayor Cusat, Colombo and Charlie Pedri in helping in the process of the delays of the inspections. Sosa said Hazleton Code Enforcement Department asks the realtors to request an inspection 15 days prior to closing. He said the inspections are done after 15 days and there are many delays. He asked the City to improve the ordinance.

Kevin Blanco, 221 Muir Ave., Hazleton, said he has been a full-time realtor since 2021. He has participated in over 100 real estate deals. He said the City of Hazleton is the most difficult and most expensive to obtain a certificate of occupancy. Blanco said the City of Hazleton could enforce fines up to \$1,000 per the City ordinance. He said the code officers take about 30 days to do the inspections.

Atty. Logsdon said City administration has to sit down with the code department in regard to their staffing issues and timing of the inspections. He stated there needs to be changes made to the City ordinance to make the inspections more efficient. He said a waiver program may need to be placed.

Cheryl Pecora, Pecora Realty, has been in business for about 55 years. She said when they list a property, a seller wants to get an occupancy permit, but the code department will not allow this. Pecora stated that when a property is inspected, the violations are corrected, but there are times when they find more violations after the corrections are made. She said she knows there are a shortage of people working in the City Code Department. She stated it is illegal to tell the buyer they will stop their closing.

Leshko told Pecora he has complete instructions to order a fire knock box. Pecora could email Leshko for the information. Pecora could then contact Leshko to install the box.

Carlos Mejia, 47 Coxe Street, Hazleton, said he is a real estate broker. He said they need to deal with the client, the City, the bank, and title company. Mejia said the City is, currently, blocking the transaction once the FHA codes are passed. He said most houses being sold are over 100 years old. He said some of his clients will be moving out of Hazleton due to these issues. He said a few people mentioned that extra money has been paid to have their inspections go through.

Michele McKinley, 625 Hayes Street, Hazleton, said she is very disappointed in this community. She said she cannot sit outside of her property without feeling threatened. She said motorcycles are doing “wheelies” on the City streets.

Carmella Yenkevich, 523 West Diamond Ave., Hazleton, said there is so much noise in the City. She asked why any of the City ordinances are not being enforced. Schoonmaker said if there is a repeat offender, they will be cited. Yenkevich said the City is “out of control”.

Jeff Derr, 821 North Vine Street, Hazleton, said he is here for the City Fireworks Ordinance. Derr said last Fourth of July, city residents encountered a “night of fear” and was a “war zone”. Derr called 911 nine times in 2024 due to the fireworks. The police officer told Derr they need to catch them “in the act”. The police officer did cite the resident. Schoonmaker said the City police officers do follow the City ordinance.

Atty. Logsdon said the City police officers are still bound by constitutional protection that they cannot unlawfully seize items. Nilles asked what the City Fireworks Ordinance states. Schoonmaker states it bans all fireworks. He said the City police officers work double and triple time during the 4th of July weekend. He said the problem is when the state changed the fireworks law.

Ted Sherrock, Hazleton, said all he hears are the resident’s “gripes”. He thanked all the City supervisors for taking all the students for tours to the City departments for the Junior Leadership program. Sherrock said the City has a lot of “positives”.

David Dominquez, 202 East Holly Street, Hazleton, congratulated Perry, Colombo and Ondishin for winning the primaries. He said there are some issues in the City that are lacking in attention. Dominquez said there are holes in a few alleys with mine subsidence's.

Dominquez spoke of the Hazleton City water supply. He said the City buys permits to access the Lehigh River. He said with more industries coming into the City, what is the City plan. Nilles stated the City is up to 9.8 million gallons of water per day. He said Niagara Water was given a lease of up to 5 million gallons of water per day. He said the City has their reservoirs and their wells. He told Dominquez to ask any other questions to the Hazleton City Authority.

Dominquez said there are a few alleys that do not have street signage. He stated for the newer residents; it would help them. Perry stated it would cost a lot of money to have signs placed. Nilles said the City is looking at getting some grants for this issue.

Ann Marie Shelby, 9 Wood Drive, Hazle Township, said in the past, if there was a loud car, they would get cited. She said Hazle Township wants to lower the air quality. Shelby said this is due to the cogeneration plant in Humboldt. She said there is blasting every day. She said the City lost a lot of money from the possible transfer station. Shelby stated the City needs an environmental study done. She said the truck traffic is very bad.

Anka Vilov, 432 West 3rd Street, Hazleton, asked if the City ordinance regarding no parking on Lafayette Court is signed by the mayor. She, recently, called 911 a couple times. She said three cars were parked on the east side of Lafayette Court. Schoonmaker told Vilov to call 911 for the police officers to come.

Comments from Mayor: None -absent

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: None

Comments from Junior Council: None

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.