

MINUTES

HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL

WORK SESSION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

Council met for a work session on Wednesday, November 7, 2018 in Council Chambers. The work session began at 7:30 p.m.

In attendance were City Council President Bob Gavio, Vice-President Allison Barletta, Jean Mope, Anthony Colombo, and James Perry.

Lynch spoke of the timeline for adoption of the 2019 budget. He said there is a timeline for Mayor Cusat to veto the budget and public inspection. He said the formal presentation, by administration, will be done next week. He said he can do a Power Point presentation with a memo from the mayor. He said the first reading will be on December 5th, with second and third readings at the December 12th meeting. He said any questions city council has on the budget, he can answer them. He said some revenue numbers were retracted.

Barletta asked if the RFP was put out for the business mercantile tax. Mayor Cusat said he does not know if the advertisement was sent out. Barletta said the businesses are not paying their business mercantile tax. Mayor Cusat said the tax is due on April 15th. She said this is a way to increase the business mercantile tax. Lynch said there will be a shortfall for 2019. Mope said contractors who have businesses outside of the City do not qualify to pay this. Barletta said this would increase the City's revenue. Lynch said there is an addition of 20%.

Licenses and permits fees were discussed. Lynch said \$30,000 was more feasible for towing with some feedback Mayor Cusat got. Lynch stated the program for parking was retracted to \$60,000. Mope asked how this can be put in the budget when the ordinance was not passed. Lynch said projecting the revenue does not violate any law. Mope stated administration is saying council created the shortfall. Lynch said if council does not feel the ordinance does not pass, then he needs to account for this amount. Barletta asked if moving permits has a line item for revenue. Lynch said there is not a specific line item for this. He said it is under miscellaneous permits. Barletta asked if the City is selling these permits. Mayor Cusat said the forms were made up. He said the City, currently, has two code officers. Mope said there needs to be more of a breakdown to see what the City is bringing in. Barletta said she counted 25 City businesses that did not get a business license permit for the past two years. Mayor Cusat said the process was changed in 2018. Mope said the businesses are required to post their permits in their establishments. Mayor Cusat said the businesses may also be required to put a sticker on their door. There was discussion to put the year or the sticker can be color coded. Mayor Cusat said their permits need to be posted on their front door.

Barletta asked about the street and curb cut permits. She said the fee was increased \$20,000 with the passing of the ordinance. Lynch said the budget line was increased because \$74,000 was received in 2018. Lynch said this can be increased.

Mope said the administration fee was raised for the towing companies. Mope asked if this on track. Lynch said yes.

Barletta spoke of fines and forfeits/violations. Barletta asked in what line item is the \$50.00 administration fee for parking and fines. Lynch said there was \$227,000 collected from court magistrate fines. Barletta asked if this can be increased.

Barletta asked why there are no parking meters on Alter Street. Mayor Cusat said they were taken down to be replaced. He said this was also done on Diamond Avenue. He said he has bought Jim Thorpe's parking meters each for \$20.00. He said the ordinance was passed, a few years ago, to put the meters up. He said the City needs to get the parts to fix the meters. Barletta asked if this will be expensive. Mayor Cusat said no. Mayor Cusat said new meters cost about \$800.00. Barletta said this will help with the crime on this street. Mayor Cusat said the meters take quarters only. Barletta said the parking fines can be increased. Lynch said the amount received is \$325,000. Mayor Cusat said this amount is under parking and fines. Mayor Cusat said the amount is being increased with residents paying older parking fines when their vehicle is towed.

Mope asked when the contract is up for the annex. Mayor Cusat said this was renewed for five more years. She asked why this would be renewed for \$12,000 when they were renting from Lackawanna. Mayor Cusat said it was not up to the City. Mope said there was a "ton" of money lost. Mope asked if the building is up for sale. Mayor Cusat said the building is up for lease.

Matt Domines, of PEL, said they are evaluating the 2019 budget draft. He said PEL will incorporate any changes into their review.

Lynch stated the Alcohol Beverage tax and State Recycling grant has basically stayed the same.

Mope asked if the City received revenue from the Altamont building tax sale. Lynch said it was a judicial sale. He said the money paid will be distributed among the shareholders. Lynch said the City will receive a percentage of the \$400,000. Mope asked if there was money received from the St. Joseph building fines. Lynch said he e-mailed Northeast Revenue to see when this money will be received. Mope said there is, currently, work being done in the St. Joseph building.

Lynch said there was \$212,000 received for a cops grant.

Lynch stated city council expenditures will stay the same.

Barletta asked what the added duties are for Allison Barletta, Mayor Cusat's secretary. Mayor Cusat said Allison is doing extra work in Community Development. He said the added income is coming out of the Community Development fund.

Barletta asked what the \$3,000 added expenses, for the Mayor's office, is for. Lynch said Mayor Cusat wants to do some training.

Barletta asked how the City's postage is done. Lynch said with volume mail, there is a postage machine being used.

Lynch said the current healthcare costs have gone up 11%. Gavio asked who the City's healthcare carrier is. Lynch said the company is Benecon. He said healthcare costs have increased across the board.

Barletta asked why the earned income tax expense has gone up. Lynch said this is due to the City collecting more. He said this is listed as a percentage.

Lynch said under administration wages, he does not take the City's healthcare. Mope said there were salary increases in 2017. Lynch said himself, Joe Zeller, Frank Vito and Jerry Speziale's wages are all paid under the grant. Mayor Cusat said Frank Vito pays 10% of his healthcare costs. Mope said this was negotiated with his contract. Mope said city council was never told this. Lynch stated he does not take benefits.

Lynch said, on the expense side, he will formally present the 2019 budget next week, at the November 14th city council meeting.

Barletta spoke of Pest Control and Building Repair and Maintenance. She asked if this can be cut back. She asked what the \$83,000 expense was for. Lynch said it was for the new boiler.

Mope asked what was built on the City garage. Mayor Cusat said there was a roof installed. He said he is making room for a new truck.

Barletta asked why there was money put into vehicles. Mayor Cusat said there was a salt box installed on a maintenance truck.

Lynch said under the wrap funding, the debt reduction will be lower.

Barletta asked why there was an increase in the Code Department. Lynch said the 2019 budget estimate is on track. Mayor Cusat said the employees went to part-time. Mayor Cusat said there are two code officers. He said there were two full-time window employees, two full-time officers, and five part time officers. He said there is one employee out on medical leave, and one employee resigned. He said there are two officers required to do City inspections and rental registrations.

Work Session meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.