

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2019**

Council met for a work session on Wednesday, August 14, 2019 in Council Chambers. The work session began at 7:20 p.m.

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

Mayor Cusat spoke of the parades and special events in the City. He said he just assigned 15 parades and special events, this week, that happen throughout the City. He stated administration and city council needs to “take this serious”. Mayor Cusat said no one wants to spend money, but they want streets blocked off and police escorts. There is nothing that limits how long these events can be. He said one group wants 13 hours, the Sunday before Labor Day. Mayor Cusat said they want to have different races, runs, and walks, but he talked them into having a parade and a walk. He said maybe these events can be limited to a three or four-hour period. Mayor Cusat said the Rails to Trails committee will be holding their run in October, 2019. He said right now the City cannot deny these groups anything. Mayor Cusat said any group can use any park in the City. He said there are so many different organizations and types of events. Mope asked if some of these events can be combined. Mayor Cusat said no. Barletta stated it needs to be fair for all organizations. He said it is not about the money, but the time and effort put into these events. Mayor Cusat said this needs to be discussed before organizations plan their events for next year. He said there needs to be something, in writing, prohibiting them from crossing Diamond Avenue or Church Street. He said the organizations do get permission from PENN DOT to use their roads. He said the organizers of FunFest give what they can afford. Mayor Cusat stated he does not want to block off the main streets due to police and fire engines responding to calls. He said everyone needs to be treated equally and safe. He stated the 2020 City of Hazleton budget needs to take “precedence” now but wanted to review this with city council. He said this needs to be in place by spring, 2020. Mayor Cusat said he wants to regulate the length and number of days for these events. He said there are a lot of private events within the City, i.e.- Blues and BBQ’s event. He said the City drops off the barricades on Friday, and then the organizations put them up themselves. He said some churches and organizations use cement blocks for barriers.

Dan Lynch, City Administrator, handed out an August, 2019 Financial Report Draft recommendation for Reconciliation to the 2019 Budget.

He stated there will be a resolution, for the next city council meeting, on September 11, 2019, to balance out some of the City departments. He said it refers to the Public Works Department.

Lynch said the revenues, from where they were in 2018, are down, as are expenses. He said the major revenue sources are real estate taxes, delinquent taxes, and EIT. He said these are all in line. He said real estate taxes, in 2018, are a little higher now than it was last year. Lynch said licenses and transfer taxes are down about \$730,000. He stated expenses, are down, to \$640,000 from this point in 2018. He said at the 61.4% mark of the year, the City is \$234,000 under this. He said the City is under budget on expenses. Lynch said most departments are in line. He said administration looks “goofy” due to absorbing the ACT 47 grant costs. He said this will be off set with recognizing these revenues and adding this to the expense line. He stated Executive, Tax Collection, Law and the City Clerk are all in line with budgeted amounts. Lynch said Data Processing (Angela Spanial’s Payroll Specialist position) is currently about \$7,400 over expected expenses due to overtime. He said all this overtime is Angela “picking up” Nancy Doyle’s duties. He said there will be a transfer recommendation to cover this. Lynch

stated the Engineering Department is in line. He stated Buildings and Plant is currently about \$139,042 under expected expenses and will be used to transfer out some funding. He said the Police budget is, currently, about \$279,955.32 under expected expense. A portion of gasoline consumption is not being allocated to police. He said this was a job allocated to Nancy Doyle but is not getting done now. Some of this funding will be recommended for transfer to public works. Lynch said the Fire Department is right online when factoring in their SAFR Grant revenue and can be added to their wage line in adjustment. He said Parking, Code, Planning and Zoning Departments are all within budget projections. Lynch said some health expenses were recorded as the previous health officer is still employed by the City. These expenses are now being recorded in Public Works. The Public Works is currently \$186,533.24 over expected budget. Lynch stated the health officer employee resigned, and the position was defunded. He is still working, but not doing this job. However, gas is not being broken out to other departments. He said personnel that had previously been attributed to health is now attributed to public works. Public Works has been over budget for 3 straight years. He said this needs to be reviewed when constructing the 2020 budget. Lynch said Frank Vito, Public Works Department Manager, has been handing in blanket purchase orders. He said this needs to be worked on. He said their needs are exceeding what is budgeted, i.e.- repairs and maintenance, for this department. He said it is also "personnel heavy" with 89% of the budget going towards personnel expenses and benefits.

Lynch stated there will be a recommendation for a budget transfer resolution for the next city council meeting. He said this will adjust budget line 380-3100- miscellaneous revenue to reflect the SAFR grant and the DCED ACT 47 grant.

TRANSFERS OUT-

Lynch said 409-5100 Wages is \$40,000, 409-5192 Health/Hospital Insurance- \$20,000, 409-5351 Building Insurance- \$50,000, 410-5231 Gasoline- \$15,000, 410-5183- Overtime- \$20,000, 410-5195- Worker's Compensation- \$50,000, 409-5213- Gasoline- \$4,000.

TRANSFERS IN-

4017-5183 Overtime (to Payroll Specialist)- \$9,000, 430-5100- Wages- \$60,000, 430-5183- Overtime- \$30,000, 430-5231- Gasoline- \$40,000, 430-5250- Repair and Maintenance Supplies- \$30,000, 430-5374- Repair and Maintenance Services- \$15,000, 430-5450- Contracted Services- \$15,000.

Barletta asked what City departments are falling behind and where the shortfall will be at the end of 2019. Lynch said he cannot "put his finger" on a specific reason with some being in a shortfall at the end of the year. He said some departments are behind, currently, but will be on budget for 2019. Lynch said he is concerned with the Business Privilege tax which was increased, for the audit, and is looking to be at the same as in 2018. He said it is a "bunch of things" that are lower than last year. Lynch stated the City has received money from the audit.

Mope stated there is no problem with the Accounts Payables invoices. Lynch agreed. He said the cash flow projection, from PEL, are recommending holding some bills until the end of 2019. He stated some departments want to retain control of contact with their vendors. He said then administration would get calls, from vendors, regarding outstanding invoices. Lynch said, sometimes, Lisa Shema (Accounts Payable Specialist), does not have the invoice to pay this bill. He said one example is from Tunnessen's Automotive. He receives calls from them stating there are outstanding invoices not being paid. He said there are being paid steadily, but there are missing invoices. He said they cannot produce copies of these invoices to him. He said it is missing before it is entered into the computer. He said the Accounts Payable invoice total, at the last city council meeting, was \$4,000. He stated the Accounts Payable invoices are caught up. Lynch said he is working on addressing this issue.

Barletta asked if the new Jeep purchase will be reimbursed by the state. She asked who will be paying for the car. Lynch said there, currently, is no one in this police position. He said the City would still pay for

the car. Mayor Cusat stated the City needs to get back to the number of police officers that are budgeted. He said, currently, there are 39 active police officers on the force with 4 officers injured, and 2 officers missing "a lot of time". He said the roster needs to get back up. Mayor Cusat stated the new police officers go through six months of training. He said there may be a few police officers retiring or moving to a different position. He said the patrol officers are the ones that get hurt. He said he does not want to leave the patrol officers short and put them into the task force. He said the problem is not the overtime, but the "wear and tear" on the guys that cannot physically perform the job. Mope asked how much is owed on the car. Lynch stated he does not know, but he will find out for city council. Mayor Cusat stated it is a Jeep truck. He stated it is \$139,000 to be reimbursed. Mayor Cusat said the City will lose the COPS grant for \$280,000 with a total of \$420,000 of unreimbursed income for the police department. He is deciding if the City will finance this or have the police department reduced from 42 to 39. He said this will need to be discussed before the 2020 budget is put together. Lynch said it depends on the size of the police force the City wants to carry. Lynch stated 6% of the budget goes towards healthcare costs. He said the City of Hazleton has a \$10,700,000 budget with \$5,000,000 spent on the Hazleton Police Department. He stated a lot of the City's resources are put into the police force.

Lynch said discussing long-term issues; the ACT 47 projections for Real Estate over the five years of the plan is 1.75 mills. The first-year projection was .33 mills with a .66 mills projection for 2019. He said there was .11 mills for debt reduction in 2019. Lynch said the 1.75 mills keeps the City at a zero deficit. He said there is excess revenue that needs to be brought into the City. He suggested establishing a direct fund millage capital fund. Lynch also stated that the City needs to address the incoming MS4 associated costs. Mayor Cusat said the ACT 537- Sewage Facilities Program, will also need to be discussed.

Lynch said there was discussion to establish a formal road program. He said it needs to be determined what it will take for roads to be paved, yearly, in the City. He said there is a total of 98 miles of road within the City of Hazleton within a seven-year lifespan. He stated the cost, for paving, would be baseline \$140,000 per mile of road and this does not include inletting or corners. He said it would total \$2,000,000/year for a proper road program. Mayor Cusat said these are the roads that are maintained in the Liquid Fuels account. He said there are a total of 114 miles of road (other roads) within the City of Hazleton. He said the City does not pave Broad, Poplar, Diamond Avenue or Church Streets.

Barletta asked if the City is still paving roads. Mayor Cusat said they are continuing to pave some of the serious roads, including Coxe Street.

Mayor Cusat said he is trying to finalize, an agreement, with UGI, where the City will take over responsibility for their patching (a little lane) which comes out to \$116,000. He stated he will find out what it will cost to do a couple streets, and utilize the \$116,000, this year, before the streets become dilapidated.

Barletta stated one of the issues that UGI does well, and that the City does not do, is sealing. She said UGI seals the holes or cracks before they become bigger. Barletta asked if the City still has this sealing machine. Mayor Cusat said if the City "saw" cuts, then the road is sealed. Mayor Cusat said the COG had a tar kettle, but this broke about three years ago. He said the COG wants the mayor to purchase their own kettle, but still wants it owned by the COG. Mayor Cusat felt if the City would pay for most of the tar kettle that the mayor would buy his own. Mayor Cusat said he recently had a 3-hour road meeting to prepare for a large paving project. He said the City needs to apply for a grant of \$3,000,000 for this project.

Lynch stated the early budget draft will be ready in early September, 2019, as required by PEL. He said the City needs to address the Public Works budget. He said the City pays for paving with the Liquid Fuels account and may need to dedicate a little more in the general fund for paving.

Mope asked if the TAN note is paid off. Lynch stated half of the TAN note is paid off, and the other half will be paid off in November, 2019.

Lynch said when municipalities do not raise taxes and until the City must for wages, healthcare, and insurance then residents get upset. He said the City has stayed under the ACT 47 projections in 2018. He said the Real Estate projections are what the City needs to raise real estate taxes. He said the City is just following the plan. He said the City is trying to fund a capital budget and pave roads.

Mayor Cusat said if the City waits any longer to pave roads, these roads will be unrepairable and will be shut down. He said some streets are "dirt" streets right now.

Mope asked Mayor Cusat about liens being placed on delinquent properties. Mayor Cusat stated the City has started cutting grass and sending out liens on delinquent properties. He said the he has constructed a fee schedule with a notice given to the property owner of when the City would come. He stated the property owner has 10 days to improve their property with a notice of violation. Mayor Cusat stated it would be 45 days in court if no response. He stated the City cannot cut all the grass on the delinquent properties. He stated a property on First and Hayes Streets, with very high grass, has been sold. He wanted to try to knock this building down to make parking spaces. Mayor Cusat stated residents are buying these properties. He stated a lien can be put on anything. Mayor Cusat said the City does not have the manpower to cut grass on all the properties. Mayor Cusat stated there have been 6-8 properties that have had their high grass cut. He stated the City uses a brush hog to cut the grass.

Mayor Cusat stated there is a serious skunk problem throughout the City. He said groundhogs and cats are also a problem.

Lynch stated he will have a very early, workable budget draft, for 2020, for the next city council meeting. He said the City needs to look at a tax increase.

Ordinance 2019-9-Amending Ordinance 2018-15- Regulating Recreational Vehicles Within the City, was discussed. Barletta stated the City needs to stop the violators. She said the ATV owners are picking their quads up and taking them. Mope stated the police officers are seeing the ATV's pull out. Mayor Cusat stated the police are not seeing them pull out. He said they are seen on Poplar, Alter, and Vine Streets. He said some of their family members are going into the woods. He said the problem ATV's are the white ones with blue trim. Barletta asked what would happen to the bike. Mayor Cusat stated the City can confiscate the bike. He stated these ATV's need to come home at night, the police can sit at their house then be charged for violation of the law. He stated the ATV would, then, be taken. Mayor Cusat asked city council if the fee should be changed. He said the original ordinance fee was set "high" and, then, dropped down. He said someone could work with Atty. Logsdon, on this ordinance, and send the amendments to him.

Ordinance 2019-10- Amending Ordinance 2015-16, Regulating Parking within the City of Hazleton and Establishing a Schedule of Fines for Violations Define in the Various Classifications of Said Regulations, was discussed. Mayor Cusat stated Section 1K- double parking, from Section 1, needs to be removed from the ordinance. He stated Sections 1L, 1M, 1N, 1O, 1P and 1Q are for No-Parking signs. He asked if city council wants the fee to be \$200.00. The city council members agreed. He stated there needs to be a "full section" that separates out the ordinance. He said Section 1K will stay and needs to be passed. Barletta said double parking is not being truly enforced. Mayor Cusat said double parking is not the same as obstructing a roadway. He stated if it is a two-lane road, i.e. – Broad Street, and the car is stopped in the right lane, then this is considered blocking a right-of-way. He said double-parking would be considered on Wyoming Street. Mope said there is a difference with stopping the flow of traffic and blocking a street. She said police enforcement is the problem. Mayor Cusat said the residents can see the violators, but the police need to see this for themselves. Mope told Atty. Logsdon he needs to check with the police department on what constitutes double parking and with cars blocking a lane. Barletta stated there is a lot of illegal parking, within the City, and this needs to be enforced. Mayor Cusat said he was looking into buying license plate readers, from Chicago, but these were repossessed. He said the current system, in the City, is outdated. He stated a problem, in the City, are a lot of elderly residents

facing the wrong way in traffic. Barletta asked Mayor Cusat if a handicapped sign is assigned to a certain person. Mayor Cusat said the ordinance needs to be changed to one handicapped sign per block. He stated a lot more residents will be looking for handicapped signs. He said he receives a lot of calls, from residents, before the winter season, for handicapped signs. He stated the City has the right to assign the sign to a specific person. He stated the City needs to look for properties, throughout the City, and put up "lots" in certain areas for off-street parking. Mayor Cusat said Harrison, Monges and Mine Streets are a nightmare.

Meeting adjourned by City Council President Gavio at 8:30 p.m.