

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019**

Council met for a work session on Wednesday, September 11, 2019 in Council Chambers. The work session began at 6:30 p.m.

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

Police Chief Jerry Speziale spoke of the Parades and Public Gatherings Ordinance. He said the City parades cost the City a “ton of money”, i.e.- Funfest and festivals. He said in many of the cities he has worked in, the past, with cities that utilize a parade/festival type of ordinance. He said the difference is the procession and picnics the churches have do not fall under this. He said these events do not “drain” the police officers’ resources. He said the police force goes to these events for five minutes. He said the City parades have DPW blocking off City intersections, leading parades, shutting parades down, and security for the festivals; he said these run into problems. Speziale said this is the difference between church picnics and the difference between a festival and concert and then a parade versus a procession. He said he will give Atty. Logsdon a copy of the ordinance. He said city council can “tweak and play” with this ordinance. He said other cities have administration determine if an organization can have a parade and then they plan their route. He said DPW would then determine the cost of manpower, barricades and the date.

Mayor Cusat said all events need the DPW department.

Speziale stated it is a permit process. Speziale stated then the organization sits down with the director of DPW for planning. He said they determine where the barricades would be placed, streets to be shut down, and extra police officers needed. He said they determine the cost of overtime. He said if it is a block party on a side street this would be considered a festival/procession. He said the police department would then determine the hours of the event and calculate the price. He said other cities charged the organizers of these events 10% of the cost for the first year, 20% of the cost the second year, third year 30% and the fourth year 40%. He said this is where it was tapped. He said all these items are in the ordinance and he will give this to Atty. Logsdon to review. Speziale said the Department of Community Affairs decided on overtime spending and controlling parades in other cities. He said there is a second component called Hole and Pole. He said if a hole is opened in a road or a pole touched in a road then police officers would be used. He said this is how other cities fund their police vehicles. He said the cities charge an administrative fee, vehicle and officer fee. Speziale said this money goes into a special account dedicated for vehicles each year. He said this is a separate ordinance and will have Atty. Logsdon review. He said it is pretty “straight forward.” He said the church events are considered processions and picnics and are very easy. He stated these events do not drain the City’s resources and no one is fighting.

Mayor Cusat said it goes beyond money. He said there is nothing that states what he can or cannot deny. He is basically “forced” to approve anything unless he sees a real problem. He said the City needs to set time limits, distances, and the number of streets to be closed. He said he has been trying to change routes to not include PENN DOT’s process. He stated Funfest organizers contact PENN DOT themselves in closing streets. He said there is nothing to say that the City cannot have a festival every day. He said there are a lot of new churches, in town, holding festivals and fundraisers outside. Mayor Cusat stated these organizations want to block streets. He said there is nothing stating the street needs to be attached to their vicinity of their building. Speziale stated this would give the City more “of a

structure". He said there can be a 48-hour time limit applied to these events. Mayor Cusat stated Funfest lasts for 48-hours. Speziale said, in other towns, they would have major parades with liquor licenses, bands, and conducted at a big park. He said the price was enormous, and then these organizations went back to the one-day event, parade and a three-hour festival. Mayor Cusat said a lot of events cancel themselves out. Mayor Cusat said a City organization wanted to do a "run" and use Center City Park up Laurel Street and across Wyoming Street. He said there would be twenty-six streets to block. He said nothing states that these events cannot be done; what should be approved and could be approved. Mayor Cusat said it is not about the money, but the City needs to decide what limitations need to be enforced. He said there needs to be a decision on what parks can be used for these events. He said he has not denied any organization to hold their events.

Barletta asked what the cost is to the City and breakdown for the use of the playgrounds and employee cost. Mayor Cusat stated Funfest costs about \$15,000. Mayor Cusat said the citizens of Hazleton have the right to use the playgrounds and trash. He said there is a baseball team that uses a playground all summer on Sundays. He said this organization uses the garbage cans and stacks up their garbage. He said this is a public facility. He said a church holds a ceremony, once a month, at Beech Street playground. Barletta asked if there is pre-work for city employees to set up events. Mayor Cusat said every picnic, parade, and run needs to have barricades set up. He said these barricades are normally put out on Fridays. Mayor Cusat stated he puts out the barricades, himself, to save on overtime costs. He said the parks close at dusk in the City. He said this Parade and Public Gatherings Ordinance was "put together" by Frank DeAndrea. Mayor Cusat said money is not the problem, but safety comes first. He said the City needs to set parameters. He stated for a parade there needs to be a police car providing safety with a car in front of the parade and an ambulance in the rear. He said there needs to be people stopping traffic at an intersection.

Mope stated, in the past, fire department volunteers and personnel would block and direct traffic. She said it will take a while before it is "fine-tuned".

Mayor Cusat said a procession is different than a race. He said for a race, every street is blocked off with personnel directing the flow of the race. He said anything that is political he has not approved for public parks. Mayor Cusat stated he does not think it is right to use the parks for these gatherings.

Mayor Cusat stated Wilkes-Barre and Scranton have recreation directors that solely plan events for their cities. He said Funfest is not organized by the City. He said the only events organized, by the City, are the Fourth of July and Christmas celebrations. He said for Halloween, the police department "does it" at Giant and Mayor Cusat has this at City Hall.

Gavio asked if any organizations called Mayor Cusat to give their input on these events. Mayor Cusat stated he never really "brought it up." Mayor Cusat said he made out a request sheet that these organizations need to fill out. He said the City needs something to "fall back on". He said he has given his opinion, to certain organizations, on how their routes would work better. He said the longest procession and parade, in the City, timewise and distance, is the MPB Church parade.

Perry stated city council members agree to Resolution 2019-34- Resolution Approving the Tri-Area Joint Recreation Authority's Certificate of Termination Upon Completion of Title Search. Gavio stated this organization is nonexistent. Mayor Cusat said it is years since Hazle Township and West Hazleton have been involved. He said the last time an officer has been put on their board was when Mayor Cusat was a council member. He said it is pretty much "defunct". Mayor Cusat said they have no money left. He said by keeping this open they need a separate insurance policy on City View Park. He said he paid the electric bills at City View Park. Barletta asked what the cost is for dropping them. Mayor Cusat said they want to disband and own several assets- i.e.- John Deere tractor and a chain saw. They also own a pavilion and storage shed.

The work session meeting was adjourned by President Gavio at 7:00 p.m.

