

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
INAUGURATION/REGULAR MEETING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2020**

**Call to Order:** Council met for the inauguration ceremony and regular meeting on Monday, January 6, 2020 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

**Silent Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance:** An invocation was given by Father Evanko- Almighty and Eternal God you have revealed your glory to all the nations. God of power and might, wisdom and justice, through you, authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgments decreed. Assist with your spirit of council and fortitude. Jeff Cusat, our mayor, and all officials on this day, may he, city council and all city administrators lead the people entrusted to them and serve with integrity. Let the light of your divine wisdom shine forth in all of their proceedings in the City of Hazleton. May they be enabled by your power and protection to exercise these duties with honesty and to bring the citizens of our City the blessings of liberty, justice and equality. We pray to you our Lord, our God, forever and ever. AMEN

This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call of Outgoing Council:** Barletta-Present; Colombo-Present; Mope-Present; Perry-Present; Gavio-Present

**Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:** The minutes of the December 17, 2019 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

**Remarks by Audience Members:** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, wished Mope and Gavio well. He also welcomed the two new council members. Rabo hopes they can help govern the City, to the best of their ability, on behalf of the people; not just the few or special interest groups.

**Remarks of Outgoing/Current City Council members and other City Officials:** Jean Mope said being on city council is like "driving on the streets of Hazleton". She stated sometimes the road is bumpy, but always reaching your goal is the destination. The destination is helping the people and trying to do it in the best way you can. Mope said she has been fortunate in this respect and has met a lot of wonderful people along her eight-year journey. She said she is truly blessed. Mope thanked everyone for making her journey a wonderful experience and she would not trade it "for the world". She thanked the residents of Hazleton for their support through the years. Mope also thanked the City employees who work "so hard" to benefit the residents. She also thanked administration, department heads, and PEL. She said sometimes city council and these groups did not see "eye to eye" but managed to retain their friendships. Mope gave a special thank-you to the present and former council members she was fortunate to serve with. She thanked everyone for a wonderful eight-years of serving the public in the City of Hazleton and wished the new council members a wonderful journey, as well. She wished good luck to all and God Bless.

Bob Gavio commented on his fellow council members- Perry and Colombo. He stated they are life-long friends. He said it was a pleasure working with them. Gavio thanked Mope for her eight years of service and considers her a friend. He spoke of Barletta, vice-president of city council. Gavio said he was a good friend of her father's and that he would be proud of her accomplishments. He said the residents are very fortunate to have her representing them. To the department heads and employees- Thank you for having an open-door policy with him. To Atty. Logsdon for "bending over backwards" for city council as well as administration. To Sam Galski- A credit to his profession. To newly elected council members, Sacco and Mundie. Gavio applauds them for wanting to represent the City. He stated he knows they will do a good job. He also thanked the residents for the opportunity of representing them for four years. To Mayor Cusat- He said they agreed to disagree. He wished him nothing but success in the future.

The Oath of Offices were administered to Mayor Jeff Cusat, Jack Mundie, and Lauren Sacco by Judge Correale Stevens.

**Roll Call of New Council:** Barletta-Present; Colombo-Present; Mundie-Present; Sacco-Present; Perry-Present.

**Remarks by Re-elected Mayor Jeff Cusat:** Mayor Cusat thanked the citizens of Hazleton. He said being re-elected is the greatest compliment any elected official can receive. It symbolizes the hard work and effort that have not gone unnoticed and the public has confidence in your ability to lead others towards a vision that will benefit the community. He thanked his family, especially his parents, that have instilled the qualities, in him, that has made him compassionate and dedicated to a community that has found him as an electable leader. He looks forward to furthering his commitment to the City of Hazleton and its residents.

**Remarks by Newly Elected Council Members:** Lauren Sacco thanked the City of Hazleton for having confidence in her to be able to step up and do this job. She also thanked her husband and her parents, mother-in-law and grandmother for their support. She said she does not come from a political background, so she is going into this "wholeheartedly" as a businessperson and as a person who lives here and sees the needs. She thanked everyone for giving her the opportunity. Sacco said she is ready to "dig in" and get started.

Jack Mundie thanked the voters of Hazleton for "putting him back" for a fifth term. He stated he always did what was right for the citizens of Hazleton and will continue doing this. He thanked his family, friends, and Lori for helping him get re-elected. He said it is not easy to get re-elected. He wants to work with city council and Mayor Cusat to do what is right for the City of Hazleton and its residents.

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At this point, Gavio announced that Council will now appoint the Council President and Vice President for the year 2020.

**Resolution 2020-1** Appointment of President of Council

Presented by Mundie. Seconded by Sacco.

**On the Question:**

Jack Mundie made a motion to nominate Jim Perry as Council President, and Sacco seconded the motion. No other nominations were presented.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-2** Appointment of Vice President of Council

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

**On the Question:**

Jim Perry made a motion to nominate Anthony Colombo as Council Vice President, and Barletta seconded the motion. No other nominations were presented.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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Perry then proceeded with the regular order of business. He thanked his former council members for showing their support for him. He said he will do the best he can. He said he had the best time, on city council, with Gavio and Mope. Perry said this is his second term. Perry said city council has worked well with Mayor Cusat. He said they have done a lot of great things for the City even being under ACT 47. He said he hopes this continues with this group. He said he will do his best to live "up to this". Perry stated he will be honest and fair as he always will be. He said you get "what you see". Perry thanked everyone for this opportunity.

**Courtesy of the Floor and Remarks on Agenda Items Only:** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of Resolution 2020-3- A Resolution Requesting Local Share Account Funds for the Hazleton Regional Airport. He said, as he stated numerous times in the past, the regional airport should be giving more back to the City after "hundreds and millions" of dollars has been poured into the airport over decades. Rabo said if it is self-sufficient; the money needs to go back to the City.

Rabo also spoke of Resolution 2020-5- Approving Contract Between the City of Hazleton and Fraternal Order of Police, Power City Lodge #18. Rabo said he hopes the police are given "fair and just" compensation as they have done a miraculous job for the City, especially in the neighborhoods. He said they go "into the trenches" and it is not easy. He hopes city council gives them their just compensation they earned.

Rabo welcomed all the new city council members and hopes Mayor Cusat and city council members can work together for the betterment of the City.

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**Old Business:**

**ORDINANCES**

None.

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**RESOLUTIONS**

None.

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**New Business:**

**ORDINANCES**

None.

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## **RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution 2020-3** A Resolution Requesting Local Share Account Funds for the Hazleton Regional Airport

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

### **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-4** A Resolution Awarding the Contract for the Wyoming Street Streetscape Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

### **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-5** Approving Contract Between the City of Hazleton and Fraternal Order of Police, Power City Lodge #18

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

#### **On the Question:**

Perry stated city council members and the city solicitor will break for an executive session to inform all council members of the details in the police contract. After the executive session, Perry announced city council and legal counsel discussed the police contract, in detail, and other personnel matters.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

### **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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Perry stated city council will go off the agenda for approving and hiring police officer with police civil service rules. He said this will be open to the public for comment. Atty. Logsdon clarified there are two new hirings, under civil service rules.

**Comments from the Audience:** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, asked what the two new hires bring the “number to” in the police force. Mayor Cusat said the police force is currently at 39 and will be at 38 after this week. Police Chief Jerry Speziale said the police department has lost a number of people to retirement and two police officers to another department. Speziale said the department will be down four officers. He said they will be hiring two new officers and bringing another person which makes it three. Speziale said the list will be expired, and will move forward, and still be dealing with “contrition” at that time. Perry stated the City will be looking at hiring another officer in February. Atty. Logsdon announced the two new hirings names are Kevin Lantigua and Linaldy Rodriguez.

**Resolution 2020-6** Approving and Hiring Police Officer in Accordance with Police Civil Service Rules- Kevin Lantigua

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-7** Approving and Hiring Police Officer in Accordance with Police Civil Service Rules- Linaldy Rodriguez

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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Perry said he would like to inform the public about city council meetings. He announced there will be a WORK SESSION meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup>. He said all meetings will be at 7:00 p.m. until May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, where the meetings will be at 6:00 p.m. Perry said there will be a regular meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. He stated every second Wednesday and fourth Tuesday will be a city council meeting throughout the year. He said there will be two meetings a month until summertime where the meetings will be monthly. He said the meetings will start at 7:00 p.m. until May 1<sup>st</sup> where the meetings will start at 6:00 p.m.

Atty. Logsdon asked Perry if he can announce the clarifications about the budget meetings in November and December. Perry agreed. Atty. Logsdon said the meeting date in November would be November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. He said this would be the only meeting this month. He said city council has not established a WORK SESSION meeting date. He said the meeting can be either the 18<sup>th</sup> or the 25<sup>th</sup>. Barletta stated the earlier the better. He said the meetings in December are December 1<sup>st</sup> and Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>. He asked if city council would like an earlier meeting in the day. City Council members agreed to a 6:00 p.m. meeting start time.

Mayor Cusat said city council needs to vote on this schedule. Perry said these dates can be adjusted as needed by council.

**Resolution 2020-8** Council Meeting Schedule for 2020

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Comments from the Audience:** Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, Hazleton, said she parks in the City parking lot and pays the monthly fee. She said on the day of the last city council meeting, she was intending to attend the meeting. She said she went to her car and slid on the ice. Deakos informed Mayor Cusat she fell. She said the worst part is that it took the City six days to deal with the ice. She said she is not the only one that parks in this area. She said this area needs to be maintained. Deakos

said if she broke a bone, she would expect the City to pay her medical bills. She said she is not the only one in this situation. She said there needs to be a procedure to make sure the parking lots are safe. She stated these are on City property and the City is making money on these parking lots. Deakos stated she wants something done about it.

Atty. Logsdon said the City will take note of this. Perry said it was a busy time for the department.

Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of a capital budget for the City. He said as far as the PEL plan, ACT 47, for the City, the City needs a capital budget. Rabo hopes the new city council can work on this. He said this needs to be presented by September according to the administrative code. He said the best way forward to working on the budget would “go after the money” Luzerne County owes the City in the amount of \$290,000. He said this would be a “perfect place to start”. He said then the City could go after other sources of revenue such as using the scales that were purchased years ago for overweight trucks. He said this would not hit the taxpayers. Rabo said it would allow for ancillary revenue for the capital budget to be utilized for fixing up the council chamber and other buildings in the City. He stated the City should start working on this. He said hiring policemen is always needs, but the City needs to take care of the other parts. He said the economic engine is the downtown, but without the neighborhoods you do not have a “heart and soul”.

**Comments from Mayor Cusat:** Mayor Cusat thanked Gavio and Mope for their service. He said, sometimes, it is “painful” to listen to Gavio. Mayor Cusat said he is very passionate about what he believes in. He said he started with Mope eight years ago in 2011. He said the first time he ran, he asked her to run with him. He thanked his administrative staff for the work they have done, and the work that they will do. He welcomed Mundie and Sacco as new council members. He stated he hopes they can get everything moving in the “right direction” in the progress that was already made.

**Comments from City Council:** Mundie commended Gavio and Mundie for a great job. Mundie said it is not easy being on council. He said it takes a lot to run. He thanked Judge Cory Stevens and Reverend Joseph Evanko. He said they have always been there for city council. He looks forward to working with council and Mayor Cusat to try and do what is right for the citizens of Hazleton to move the City in the right direction.

Barletta stated it has been an honor to work with Gavio and Mope. She said there were wonderful times in the council chambers. She said the most important thing is having council come together as a group. Barletta said council has accomplished a lot the past two years. She said they may not agree on everything, but city council votes and moves on. She said there was a great relationship between them. Barletta said city council participated together in Funfest, Halloween Trunk or Treat, Holiday Ugly Christmas Sweaters, and exchanged cookies over the holidays. She thanked them for the experience working with them. She thanked Mope for all her knowledge. She said she will miss them a lot. She looks forward to the same relationship with Mundie and Sacco. She welcomed them to council and looks forward to working with them. Barletta welcomed Mayor Cusat back as another term as mayor. Barletta wished him the best. She said they don’t always agree but come up with the best solution for the residents of the City. She looks forward to working with Mayor Cusat.

Sacco said Mope and Gavio left “big shoes” to fill and hoping they can step up “to the plate” and follow in the trend they set for them. She said this is a city council that is working well together and look to beat to the same drum and keep it going.

Colombo welcomed Mayor Cusat to a second term and working together with him. He welcomed Mundie and Sacco. He said it will be a team effort to move the City forward. He thanked Gavio and Mundie for their dedicated work for the City. He said he will miss them both and hopes the City can move forward. He thanked the fellow council members for putting their trust in him and electing him as vice-president.

Perry thanked Mayor Cusat for being re-elected. Perry said he and city council will work well together. He said Gavio helps the residents out all the time. Perry stated people do not realize what is done "behind the scenes". He said Mope will still be here and is a good voice for the citizens of the City. Perry said he will try to fill these shoes. He thanked them for their service. He said this has been the best council he has been on. He welcomed Sacco and Mundie. Perry said the people have faith in them as does city council. He stated city council will work together, with PEL's oversight, to move the City forward. Perry thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

**Benediction:** The benediction was given by Father Joseph Evanko.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m. Meeting adjourned.