

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2020**

Council met for a work session on Monday, February 10, 2020 in Council Chambers. The work session began at 8:15 p.m.

In attendance were City Council President James Perry, Vice-President Anthony Colombo, Allison Barletta, Lauren Sacco and Jack Mundie. City Officials present were Mayor Jeff Cusat, Atty. Sean Logsdon, Dan Lynch and Fire Chief Donald Leshko.

Perry spoke of Ordinance 2020-5- An Ordinance Regulating the Cutting, Opening, or Excavating within the Cartways of the Public Highways within the City of Hazleton, for Newly Paved Streets. Mayor Cusat said the City has been talking about this the past five years. He said he finally “came up with” something everyone can agree on. He stated the City needs to be more protective of the work that has been done. Mayor Cusat said there has been a lot of paving done. He said he does not want to jeopardize this. He said, three years ago, Carson Street was done, and two days later, this street was torn up. He said two years ago Laurel Street was done and there was a water main break, in front of the school in three spots, with two patches. Perry stated the City had no recourse to this. Mayor Cusat said Vine Street was done, in 2020, and two days later, this street was torn up with a water main break. Mayor Cusat said if there is an emergency, they need to repair “curb to curb” so there is a smooth transition into the cut. He said the City is working well with UGI following them “behind”. He said the water authority has some infrastructure that is very old. He said it is not their fault, but it is not the City’s fault either. He said the City is spending a “ton of money” and getting stuck with the same problems. He said “going up” Laurel Street motorists “will hit” three potholes.

Barletta asked what is in place now. Mayor Cusat said if there is an emergency, there is nothing in place now. He said this ordinance includes everything. He said, currently, they cut and pave one foot bigger than the widest width. He said the City goes “curb to curb”. Mayor Cusat stated UGI gives the City the money, but only measures the spots. He said they pave the whole street. Mayor Cusat said this ordinance states the street cannot be cut in six years. He said it used to be five years. Mayor Cusat said UGI, in the past, stopped at every house, on Alter Street, and offered the residents to change their heating, to gas, for free. He said now the residents are charged. He said UGI would have to pay to replace any part of the street that is cut. He said to spend all this money paving, the authorities need to take more responsibility. Perry asked if this is typical with other municipalities ordinances. Mayor Cusat said yes; this ordinance may be more stringent. Colombo said they also need to seal the streets. He said a recent paving project, done by Pence, on Poplar Street, the seams have separated. He said they did not do a good job. He said the manholes are “worse than they were before”. Mayor Cusat said the manholes are not the sewer authorities. He said the one the City is getting the “bump on” are from Verizon and are a different size from the sewer authorities. He said the sewer authority offered to put the rims in but do not fit. Colombo said this should have been included in the job with Pence. He said it is a mess.

Barletta said the documentation fee, for GIS, needs to be higher. She said \$20.00 seems to low. Mayor Cusat said the fee must be the same. He said if the GIS fee is changed in this ordinance, it needs to be changed elsewhere. He said with the GIS fee, the City cannot make money on this. Barletta said the GIS fee, for the signs, is \$5.00. Mayor Cusat said he thought he changed this fee. He said this needs to be \$20.00 also. He said it needs to cover the cost of the equipment and the labor. Atty. Sean Logsdon stated there needs to be a uniform fee for the GIS documentation.

Perry asked if there has been any “push back” from the companies for being too stringent. Mayor Cusat stated he does not know if the companies saw this ordinance. Mayor Cusat stated UGI is, currently, giving the money to the City. Perry said maybe all the companies will all start doing this.

Perry said a lot of roads, in the Heights section of Hazleton, are bad.

Carmen Barletta, city resident, asked if there is a timeframe to fix the hole after it is dug. Atty. Logsdon said for small area pave cuts within five days of issuance of the permit or 24 consecutive hours of the initial cut, whatever comes first, during the normal work week, excluding holidays and weekends. Mayor Cusat said they patch it and then come back. Barletta said he is inquiring about a final restoration of the hole. He said he knows, as a Hazleton Water Department employee, when they have leaks the holes are mud when they are done. He said they then put “modified” in, compact it, and then tries to do the best they can. He said there needs to be “some kind” of distance. He said coming back, within one week to try to finish it, it will not last. Mayor Cusat said UGI would come back, but a “bump in it” and then the following year “saw cut it”. Colombo asked if they could use the flowable fill. Barletta said this flowable fill was used when Broad Street was redone. He said if the company needs to re-dig, the street is a mess. He said then the work hours are double or tripled to dig up the flowable fill. Barletta said it is like expanding foam.

Perry also spoke of Resolution 2020-14- Resolution Requesting the City Administration to Study the Feasibility, Cost, and Means of Implementing a Designated Parking Program for Veterans in the City of Hazleton. Colombo said a study needs to be done to determine what different classes of veterans are eligible for parking spaces. He said there are veterans who have been discharged or career or volunteer fire fighters who are veterans. He said there are also active veterans. He said it needs to be determined if it is feasible or practical. Mayor Cusat said it is going to be “tough to do”, but he will look at it. He asked Colombo if the veterans will be charged because the handicapped residents are charged. He said when you start charging for veterans, fire, policemen, handicapped, and military residents, then every spot in the City would need to be charged. He said he likes this idea. Barletta disagreed. Mayor Cusat said there are not enough spots, in the City, to do what he wants. Mayor Cusat said parking is a premium in the City.

Colombo said the City needs to be grateful to the veterans for what they do for the country.

Barletta suggested making parking spots at the City’s parks, something the City owns, or any events. Colombo suggested parking spaces at the parking garage or the dog park.

Dan Lynch, city administrator, suggested residents, for the month of November, come up “ahead of time”, fill out a form, show their DD 214 form, and get a parking pass for the meters. He said they can park at the parking garage or meters with this pass.

Mayor Cusat said, in 2017, the City investigated getting the veteran bus riders to ride for free on the City’s buses. He stated Ralph Sharp, Hazleton Transit Authority Director, had tried to get this program in the City, but this was not allowed by his “higher ups”.

Sacco asked if the City would allow a City business to sponsor this. Mayor Cusat said if someone would pay for it. He said how could the City determine a real veteran. Mayor Cusat stated when there was a problem with a civil service test, in the City, and this is where he found out the differences. He stated he did not know there are differences between a person who is on leave, is an active veteran, or in the army reserve. He said someone who is honorably discharged is considered a veteran.

Lynch said the veteran should have a DOD ID. He said then the resident can show administration their ID and get a pass. He said this would also be easier for parking enforcement employees in checking

meters. He said they would get a paper pass which could be red, white, and blue. He said it can be in November for Veteran's Day.

Colombo said if Cusat would say all veterans could come to his restaurant on Veteran's Day, for a meal, they do not have to prove they are a veteran. He said the problem is nobody cares.

Mayor Cusat said it is a good idea, but the City cannot accommodate everybody. He said the City does not have the space.

Sacco asked if there is a Veteran's Day ceremony. Mayor Cusat said yes.

Lynch asked city council members if he should have Ryan Hottenstein, Vice-President of Financial Solutions, to discuss the Hazleton Fire Department purchasing of fire trucks. He said he can talk about borrowing options, how to structure a loan and a lower impact in the short term. Perry asked if there is a better time of the year to do it. Lynch said it is a process. He said a bond would take a couple months. Mayor Cusat said it takes about 18 months from purchase to delivery. He said the City would need to "lock" in now. Lynch said fire trucks are long-term assets because their service life is about 20 years or more. He said the City could look at a bond.

Donald Leshko, Hazleton Fire Chief, said he is applying, through the AFG program, for a pumper. He said he was contacted by Matt Cartwright's office that this grant has been opened and is starting the process. He said if this happens, it will coincide with the whole plan. Leshko said the process to order, the vehicle, is one year plus. He stated whatever the fire department has then would be sold. He said then this would bring in revenue, and would be put right back in. Mayor Cusat asked what the increase was at the last purchase. Leshko said there is a 5-10% increase every year in pricing because of costs. Perry asked if there are any tariffs. Leshko stated, currently, he did not know. He said going through the COSTARS program and their incentive, the City would get a better deal. He said the biggest thing are the long-term years.

Lynch said Hottenstein can go through a "bunch" of different options. He said, if city council members are agreeable, he can come within the next month or two. Perry asked if the City would get a better deal on a new vehicle as opposed to a new/used vehicle. He said the state would probably "turn it over" in a couple years because they have so much money. Lynch said the City will start retiring its debt within a few years. He said Hottenstein explained how the loan to satisfy the deficit would balloon in payment. He said it may not be as upfront of an impact as you think. Perry said city council needs to see some numbers.

Barletta asked how the police cars are holding up. She asked if the City received three new vehicles. Mayor Cusat said the City had applied for an emergency LSA grant which the City got. Mayor Cusat said the new cruisers went to the detectives. He stated he took Police Chief Speziale's SUV and gave it to Will. He said Speziale got a new, smaller car. Mayor Cusat stated the cost of a Ram Charger is \$29,000. The cost of a Ford is \$52,000. He said this car will be moved to the undercover policemen. He said Will's car will go to the code department and be "tinted out". Barletta asked what the City is doing with the plow truck that was involved in an accident. Mayor Cusat stated it is "garbage" and will be on the list to get rid of. He said it was a 1980 and can be parted out.

Perry asked if the City is doing anything with a towing ordinance. Mayor Cusat said he is still working on this.

Perry adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.