

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020**

**Call to Order:** Council met in regular session on Wednesday, March 11, 2020 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm.

**Silent Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance:** A silent moment was taken followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-present; Colombo-present; Mundie-present; Sacco-present; Perry-present

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:** The minutes of the February 25, 2020 Regular Meetings were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications:** Ryan Hottenstein, Financial S&Lutions Vice-President, spoke of several borrowing options for the City of Hazleton. He reviewed the City of Hazleton's debt portfolio with a handout to city council members. Hottenstein stated the City of Hazleton, currently, has four pieces of debt outstanding with a 2005 issue, 2015 note, 2017 DCED loan, and 2018 note. He said these debts have fully matured with the last of them, DCED note, in 2027. Currently, for 2020 through 2025, the average annual debt service, for the City of Hazleton, is \$1,300,000. For 2005, the average rate is 4.26%, 2015 is 2.8%, DCED is 0, and 2018 note is 4.7%.

He said, currently, the markets for municipal debt have never been lower. Hottenstein said the markets "are crazy" and changing "day to day". He said he cannot guarantee a rate from one day to the next. He said if the City were to issue debt, based on current market rates and using a competitive scale, the City could refund all debt, except for the DCED debt, at cost savings to the City.

Hottenstein said if the City did not borrow any new money and refunded existing debt, the rate would drop from 1.3% to 1.25% and would receive savings, on an annual basis, of \$30,000 through 2023 and increase savings to 46, 66, and 10 with a total savings, to the City, of \$238,000. He said this is based on market rates which are, currently, fluctuating. He said, if they hold, the City would achieve some savings on the refunding. He said one option is for borrowing \$3,000,000, level debt service, for 20 years. He said there would be an increase, in the budget, from a "cash flow prospective", in 2021, of \$143,000 that the City would have to find "out of its coffers" to fund the project. He said the level debt service, on the new piece of loan, would be about \$190,000. Hottenstein said the total, on this new portion, would be \$3,500,000 and borrowing \$3,000,000 and paying back about \$500,000 in interest. Another option is borrowing \$3,000,000 and keeping a 20-year maturity, but wrap the debt service around the "back end" where there is some relief so it is more affordable for the City upfront. He said the impact, for this year, would go down slightly, \$2,000, and in the following year, an increase of \$18,000, \$25,000, and when it finally fully matures, \$266,000. He said over the life, the City would pay back \$3,700,000. Hottenstein said this "goes up" because the maturity is "pushed out". He said this would cost more but there is relief "up front". The last option would be to shorten up to a 10-year term and accelerate the payments to pay it off quicker when the debt service falls off in 2026 and 2027 to pay more. He said this would accelerate it on the "back end" with higher payments, in 2027, of \$686,000 but the entire portfolio matures in 2030. He said the impact, in the first five-six years, is \$22,000, \$30,000 and in the "back end" goes up when it is paid off. He said, in total, the City is borrowing \$3,000,000 and paying back \$3,257,000. He said, currently "given the market", the City could look to do a bond issue to lock in the rates. He said if the City does a bond issue the City would not have to worry about rates resetting when pricing the bonds and

selling them because these are locked in.

Mundie asked how much the fees on the bonds would add to the cost of the borrowing. Hottenstein said the total fees would be \$200,000 on a \$10,000,000 issue with a five-year "call".

Perry asked how the \$3,000,000 amount was chosen. Hottenstein stated the \$3,000,000 is about where the trucks would cost and some extra capital. He said if the City is working on a larger capital improvement plan or a small plan, all this can be adjusted.

Mundie asked what company Hottenstein is with. Hottenstein said he is with Financial S&Lutions out of Reading, PA. He said there are also offices in Scranton and Forty Fort, PA. Mundie asked Hottenstein if he has done any municipal refunding lately. Hottenstein said he has done plenty of work in the area; Palmer Township and Tunkhannock School District. Mundie asked if the rates of funding are due to the "last couple of days". Hottenstein stated municipal rates have been low for quite some time now, and the past two-three weeks have dropped even further. He said there is so much uncertainty in the market. He said a lot of deals are being "pulled" from the calendar because investors do not know what will happen. He said he needs to see the market "shake-out" within the next couple of weeks.

Perry asked what scenario Hottenstein would recommend. Hottenstein stated it depends what the City's needs and objectives are. Hottenstein said he would need to speak with city council further. He said it can be targeted to the fastest payback period or the least impact on the budget. He stated column "F", on the debt service handout, is the "happy medium". Hottenstein said this gives the City room, in 2026 & 2027, to borrow money and a "gap" of \$600,000 to "layer-in" new money.

Mundie asked Hottenstein what the City's rating is. Hottenstein said, currently, the City is unrated. He said he would look to do bond insurance. Mundie asked bond insurance is more money than the 200. Hottenstein said the bond insurance is included.

Mundie asked Mayor Cusat what the administration recommends. Mayor Cusat said the City needs to look into refinancing. He said the City needs to decide how much of the capital budget to look for. He stated the lifespan, of the fire trucks, is twenty years. He said a fire truck goes up 8% per year. Mayor Cusat said if the City keeps "putting it off", it is just putting off building in the cost of it later. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if the City needs a truck soon. Mayor Cusat stated in the plan, trucks should be repurchased. He said there is an 18-month leeway on the truck. He said the City needs to consider purchasing two or three pieces needed because of the equipment purchase. Mundie said there would be savings on the refinancing of the bond. Mayor Cusat said he likes column "F". He said the six years are the same and putting off paying off the debt in six years. He stated the money saved on the fire engines, currently, would be the same with 8% of a compounding rate with paying market price at a later date. He said the City would get a better return on equipment to be sold. He said some of the three engines have some value that can be recognized, at this time. Mundie asked how many trucks need to be replaced.

Chief Donald Leshko, Hazleton Fire Department, said there are three vehicles that need to be purchased. He said, in the plan, there are two vehicles already, as stated, that need to be replaced. He said in 2021, there is another vehicle that will need to be replaced. He said, in fiscal responsibility, the City would be better to purchase everything all at once and move forward. Leshko stated the City can buy the equipment at today's price. He said last week he submitted a grant, to FEMA, for a pumper. Leshko stated if this is awarded, this would cover the cost of one truck. He said there would be a 10% match put "to it". He said his recommendation is to go through with the process, but not sign a purchase order

until he hears about the grant from FEMA. He said if the City would sign an order, FEMA would automatically disqualify him. Perry asked Leshko when he would hear about the grant. Leshko

stated the grant closes on Friday. He said he is hoping by mid-summer. Leshko said he wants to “get down” to a solid price because of the multiple vehicle purchase. He said he also has vehicles to put up for sale. He said the years of the vehicles, taken out of service, to be sold, are 1987, 1995 & 2002. He said the pumpers, per the National Fire Protection Association, (NFPA) standard, are a fifteen-year timetable and ladder trucks are twenty years. Perry asked Leshko if he is repairing them. Leshko said yes. He said the 1987 truck needed to be put out of service and parts needed to be rebuilt because they do not make the parts anymore. He said he has creative people to fix the older trucks.

Mundie asked Mayor Cusat how much extra the City is borrowing. He said it would be \$3,257,000. He stated this gives the City better options in refinancing within seven years. Hottenstein said this gives city council an idea. He said he does not need any solid numbers. He said a lot of the fees do not change based on the size but are expensive to do. He said the City needs to borrow everything at one time and especially at these rates. Mundie asked how much leeway he needs. Hottenstein said it is typically 90 days. He said the stockholders and investors would like to see the City’s 2018 audit. He said the sooner the 2018 audit can “get in” as disclosure, it would be better. Mundie asked if the rates would stay for 90 days. He said as soon as the bonds are priced, they are locked. He said the first thirty days are preparatory work- i.e.- working with the City, gathering information, and putting an offer and documentation. The next thirty days would be pre-sale work, calls, rating, printing statement, and pricing. He said once the pricing is accepted, the rates cannot change. The last thirty days are for closing; filing everything with DCED.

Hottenstein said his company is engaged with the City of Hazleton.

**Bid Opening: Hazleton City Hall Sidewalk Improvement Project.** All bids were opened and read by Atty. Sean Logsdon.

1. Bognet, Inc., Hazleton, PA. BASE BID- \$101,750. BID BOND included.
2. M&J Excavation, Inc., Bloomsburg, PA. BASE BID- \$66,000. BID BOND included.

All bids were given to Don Totino, Barry Isett & Associates Engineer.

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of Ordinance 2020-9- An Ordinance Approving the Revised Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Amended Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2020 and Ordinance 2020-7-Modifying Consolidated Plan for CDBG Program Year 2013, 2014-2017, 2018, 2019. He said the ordinance stated there was not enough for the the slum and blight removal. He asked Mr. Zeller to clarify this. He stated there needs to be a way to identify the properties that are considered blighted. He wants to know if the reduction is based on this. Rabo also wanted to know for the appointments to the boards if there were applications filled out. Perry stated these are Mayor Cusat’s appointments. Rabo said city council votes on his appointments. He said a copy of the applications can be sent to council.

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## **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

## **(1<sup>ST</sup> READING)**

### **Ordinance 2020-7**

Modifying Consolidated Plan for CDBG Program Year 2013, 2014-2017, 2018, 2019 (1<sup>ST</sup> READING)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 1<sup>ST</sup> READING**

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### **Ordinance 2020-9**

An Ordinance Approving the Revised Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Amended Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2020 (1<sup>ST</sup> READING)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

Perry asked if Zeller wanted to speak on this ordinance. Zeller said CD received \$30,000 more than anticipated. He said the amounts were changed to reflect this. Barletta asked how much was changed. She asked how much street improvements “went up”. Zeller said he would have to check on this.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 1<sup>ST</sup> READING**

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### **Ordinance 2020-10**

LERTA Ordinance Establishing Tax Exemptions from Property Tax for Certain Deteriorated Industrial, Commercial, or Other Business Property; Defining Eligible Deteriorated Areas, Setting a Maximum Exemption Amount, and an Exemption Schedule; and Providing a Procedure for Obtaining an Exemption (1<sup>ST</sup> READING)

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 1<sup>ST</sup> READING**

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## **(2<sup>ND</sup> AND 3<sup>RD</sup> READINGS)**

### **Ordinance 2020-4**

An Ordinance Approving the Application for a HUD Section 108 Loan (3<sup>RD</sup> READING)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

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**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**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 (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Barletta.

**On the Question:**

Barletta asked Mayor Cusat if he will be meeting with the utility companies once this ordinance is passed. Mayor Cusat said he met with them this week. Barletta asked what their feedback was. Mayor Cusat said there are a couple of concerns with cutting of a street or a driving lane or non-driving lane. Barletta asked if he sees any issues. He said they may not pay for the increased repairs, but would follow the ordinance. Mayor Cusat said he gave some suggestions.

Perry asked what the companies would do differently now with cutting streets. Mayor Cusat said it would be "curb to curb" in both directions. Perry asked who paid the City for street repairs in the past. Mayor Cusat said UGI. He said he had an extensive meeting, this week, with UGI. He said this applies to new roads. He said UGI gave him their five-year projections along with the Hazleton Water Authority and UGI. He gave them maps of the City, will be "marked-up" and then the roads will be paved after they do their work. He said Carson Street, three years ago, was cut up two days later. He said also Laurel Street, by Holy Family School, was "busted" after it was paved. He said, in 2020, 22<sup>nd</sup> and Vine Streets was also "busted" two days later.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

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**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 (**3<sup>rd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2020-8**

Amending Ordinance 2006-25, and 2020-1, Regulating the Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, Providing for Application Review and Procedures for Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, and Renewal of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs in the City of Hazleton (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Mundie asked if the City could have disabled veterans exempt from paying the \$5.00 monthly fee. He said the veterans who “fought for our country”. Atty. Logsdon stated it is, currently, not in the ordinance. Mayor Cusat said he is not objecting to this request. He said when it was discussed about parking for other veterans, it needs to be defined. Mundie said a disabled veteran is considered disabled, from the Veterans Administration, who gets a disability pension and would be exempt from the \$5.00 fee. Mundie said they can just “show something”. Atty. Logsdon asked if this would extend the exception for veterans who were a veteran and is now disabled or disabled connected to their service. He said he is referring to a Vietnam Veteran who has a handicapped card. Mundie said he does not know how the other council members feel. Perry stated city council should pass this ordinance and then research this later. Barletta agreed. She said this would be hard to do. Mundie also agreed. He said this can be done later with researching the procedure for other cities. Mayor Cusat suggested city council pass this ordinance just to “get it moving”.

Pedri said there is nothing on the City’s application that refers to veterans. He also said he also Reviewed Wilkes-Barre and Pittston’s applications and they do not have anything on theirs about Disabled veterans. Mundie said city council will pass this ordinance and make an amendment later. Mundie said Atty Logsdon can “find” some wording. He said disabled veterans should be exempt.

Pedri said the placards change every five years. He said there was an issue for charging a resident an \$80.00 fee for the new person to add a sign. He said, it was decided, to make the fee \$35.00 for this. He said this was the only real amendment. Pedri said a lot of residents came in to talk with him about this issue. He said the ordinance, as presented, is sufficient. Pedri said it is implemented now, and has prepared applications, with his staff, to fulfill this and have a limited access. Barletta asked if he received a lot of calls. Pedri said yes. He stated the residents wanted to know how this “operates”. He told them it can be charged \$5.00/monthly or \$60/yearly up front. Pedri said most residents were interested in doing this. Perry asked how many handicapped signs there were in the City. Pedri said there are about 144.

Mayor Cusat suggested city council make an amendment. He said the first year would be prorated to \$5.00 per year, and subsequently, every year, renewable at \$60.00/yr.. He said the City cannot bill the resident \$5.00 every month. Barletta stated she thought it was billed every year. Mayor Cusat said the wording of the ordinance states a \$5.00 monthly fee. He said it is extra work for the City. He asked if someone could make an amendment.

**Motion to Amend:**

Presented by Mundie. Seconded by Barletta.

**Roll Call (On Amendment):** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**MOTION TO AMEND PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Roll Call (As Amended):** Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**ORDINANCE PASSES, AS AMENDED, ON 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

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**Ordinance 2020-8**

Amending Ordinance 2006-25, and 2020-1, Regulating the Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, Providing for Application Review and Procedures for Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, and Renewal of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs in the City of Hazleton **(3<sup>rd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Barletta asked how long the timeline is. Mayor Cusat said it depends on the process. He said then the employees will “break-out” the generator and do a bunch “of them” at one time. He said it can be one month or one day. He said he is not going to send out the crew for one. Perry asked if the payment accompanies the application. Pedri said yes.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES AS AMENDED**

**RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution 2020-21**

Amended Resolution Approving the Agreement to  
Authorize Electronic Access to PennDOT Systems

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon said PENN DOT came back and said to just sign their form. He said he created a resolution, but their form just needs to be signed. He said his resolution can be attached to their form.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

**Resolution 2020-22**

Resolution Amending the 2019 Annual Action Plan for the Community  
Development Block Grant Program

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

**Resolution 2020-23**

Appointment to the Zoning Hearing Board-  
Robert Hoegg

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-24**

Appointment to the Zoning Hearing Board-  
Bhavin (Sonny) Patel

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Perry.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-25**

Appointment to the Zoning Hearing Board-  
John Paletski

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-26**

Appointment to the Zoning Hearing Board-  
Phil Andras

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Mundie.

**On the Question:**

Perry asked if Kevin Schadder is still on the board. Mayor Cusat said he did not attend eight meetings in a row. He said now with the new zoning ordinance, attendance is vital. He said the zoning ordinance has not been revised in 30 years. He said there will be over 200 pages. He said it took over 1 ½ years to “put together”. Perry asked when it will be ready. Mayor Cusat stated it should be ready in about one month. He said it needs to go through planning, zoning and then to city council. He said there are many things “out there” now that need to be addressed that were not there 30 years ago. He said there are living situations, medications, therapies, and home businesses that are now addressed in the prior ordinances. He said this new ordinance is extensive.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-27**

Appointment to the Zoning Hearing Board-  
Scott Letcher



Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-28** Appointment to the Planning Commission-  
Mark Ondishin

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-29** Appointment to the Hazleton Housing Authority -Edward Shemansky

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Barletta asked if this is a new appointment. Mayor Cusat said no; it is a reappointment. She asked if these are all reappointments. Mayor Cusat said no; Mark Ondishin and Phil Andras are new appointments.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-30** Appointment to the Civil Service Commission-  
E. Thomas Sandrock

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Perry.

**On the Question:**

Perry asked if Mr. Sandrock is a new appointment. Mayor Cusat said yes. Barletta asked how many people are on the Civil Service board. Mayor Cusat said three.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**New Business:** Joe Zeller, Community Development Director, spoke of Ordinance 2020-9 An Ordinance Approving the Revised Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Amended Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2020. He said he anticipated \$670,500 when it was first brought before, city council, in 2019. Zeller stated he received \$50,000 more than anticipated which was \$30,000 more than 2019. He said the demolition stays the same, streets “went from” \$416,400 to \$329,618 but the amount decreased will pay the Section 108 loan which is \$125,000. He said administration changed from \$134,100 to \$143,654 based on the 20% cap. Mayor Cusat said it “all” went to street repairs.

Atty. Logsdon conferred with Don Totino, Barry Isett and Associates Engineer, regarding the bids for the City Hall Sidewalk Improvement project. He stated Totino reviewed the bids and asked city council to make a motion to award the base bid and all applicable add alternatives within the available funding to M&J Excavation, Inc., pending solicitor and engineer review.

Perry asked where the sidewalks are. Mayor Cusat said he was not sure what the base bid was but all alternatives will try to go as far around as possible.

Don Totino said the base bid is the repair of the wall, caps, and pillars. He said the add alternative 1 is for work along Church Street. He said, he believes, the work for Green Street will be awarded due to available funding. He said Maple Street will be awarded as add alternative 2.

Barletta asked what wall he is referring to. Totino said the surrounding retaining wall around City Hall.

Barletta asked if the whole wall will be replaced. He said it will be repointed and some pillars will be removed and replaced with the ones in the back which are no longer needed.

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Mundie.

**Resolution 2020-31** -A Resolution Approving the City Hall Sidewalk Improvement Project contract

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Old Business:** Atty. Logsdon said when he was changing the Zoning Board appointments, there were four reappointments and one new appointment. Mayor Cusat said he reviewed all the old resolutions. He said some old resolutions were written incorrectly. Mayor Cusat stated some board members expired on the same term. Perry asked if the terms would all be the same. Mayor Cusat stated the terms will be staggered. He said before the terms were 2,2 & 1 which violated the Authorities Act. He said that is why all five were changed.

Atty. Logsdon said he also changed the format. He said including addresses for the board members

is not recommended when placed on the internet. He stated the city clerk puts a lot of ordinances, on the City of Hazleton's website, and the addresses do not need to be advertised. He said if a resident says a board member does not live in Hazleton or has a business in the City can be addressed. He said the address does not need to be advertised online to qualify under the NPC to serve on these boards. He also omitted putting board members who left their position in the resolution. Atty. Logsdon said this procedure is more simplified.

Perry asked if this works for all boards and commissions. Mayor Cusat said there is a total of 23 different authorities, boards and commissions. Mayor Cusat said he is reviewing all the old resolutions to make sure they are all in compliance. He said these are the most important authorities- Zoning, Hazleton Housing, and Civil Service Commission.

Perry asked if the Health Services Authority is still together. Pedri said, currently, there is one vacancy on the Health Services Authority. Mayor Cusat said this is a city council appointment. Perry asked anyone for volunteers. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if there are any vacancies in the other board positions. Mayor Cusat said there will be because he is reviewing these positions. He said some boards are defunct. He said the Shade Tree Commission is still "there" but have not been appointed since 2011 along with the UCC Board. He said some positions are automatic and assigned. Mundie asked if the Pension Board has met lately. Mayor Cusat stated the super board has not met in about one year. He said representatives have met with investment groups but has not met as a group. Barletta asked why. Mayor Cusat said it has not called for it; investments have been doing good. Mundie suggested the Pension Board may want to meet now with the actions in the last few days.

**Comments from the Audience:** Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, Hazleton, said some signals, for the crosswalks are not working in the City. She asked if the state or the City repairs them. She said a lot of the buttons do not work, about 75% of them. She said the signal at Church and Green Streets also does not work. Atty. Sean Logsdon said Broad Street is under the state.

Don Totino said the state owns the road, but the traffic signals are owned and maintained by the City. He stated if there is an issue with signal timing, this needs to be brought to the Department of Transportation and have them check it. He said there is, typically, a service agreement that the municipality has with a vendor for signal services. He said they would come out to check them.

Deakos said the most critical one is on the corner of Broad and Church Streets. She said she jaywalks when they don't work. She said this is dangerous at this intersection. Perry said this would then go to the DPW department and then the vendor would be contacted.

Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, said he has two comments and two questions. He asked regarding the newspaper article about the towing award and "being set". Atty. Logsdon said the towing is awarded. Rabo also asked if the bids for the towers needed to come "in front" of council. Atty. Logsdon stated they were RFP's. Rabo said he was told, through the right-to-know law, that he could not know the names of the persons involved in the scoring. He said when he read the case law, it said it was before the bidding. He said now the bid is awarded, he wants to know why he cannot know the names. Atty. Logsdon said he would have to "bring this up" with the right-to-know officer. Mayor Cusat said the proposals are releasable after the contract is awarded. He said the scoring sheet is an internal document. Rabo said he is not asking for the scoring sheets but for the names of the persons who

did the scoring. Mundie asked if Rabo can appeal this to the state for an RTK. Atty. Logsdon said he can. Mayor Cusat said there is no sheet that contains the names in the scorers. He said this sheet is an internal document which cannot be released under the right-to-know. Rabo asked if he can know the names. Mayor Cusat said the scorers were Police Chief Jerry Speziale, Captain Robert DeMelfi, and Lieutenant Kirk Wetzel.

Rabo said he was at the Luzerne County meeting last night. He stated Mayor Cusat was making the "pitch" for the tax collection, for the City, for Northeast Revenue to continue their services. He said on behalf of the City, and not on behalf of administration or the mayor. He asked if city council knew about this. Perry said the city council does not award this; it is a county "thing". Rabo said city council and the mayor are co-equal branch of the government. He said city council could have opposed this. He said Mayor Cusat represents the City. Mayor Cusat said Northeast Revenue's collection rate is 93.5%. Perry stated no one comes close to this rate. Mayor Cusat said the county was at 84% when they collected it. He said they have a 9 ½% better collection rate and 9 ½% of about \$1,000,000 excess revenue they brought in. Rabo asked if Northeast Revenue had a problem with delinquent garbage for the City of Scranton. Rabo said the City of Scranton is suing this company due to delinquent garbage. Dan Lynch, city administrator, stated it is the county contract, with Northeast Revenue, to collect this. Lynch said, from his perspective, the City's collections are very good. Rabo said he still has a problem with the \$800,000, in the past, with the delinquents in the City, that caused the shortfall. He said he stated this in front of the state and city council. He said Mayor Cusat knows this. Rabo said he agrees, with Mayor Cusat, on monetization. He stated if the City has cash inflow, predictable and sustainable revenue coming in, there is no need to monetize. He said the City needs to keep their delinquents. Rabo stated if there is a shortfall that is hurting the City in making payroll, for the employees, this would be a problem.

Lorna Veglia, 21 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, said she lives across the street from the Altmiller Playground. She commended the City for the recent renovations to the courts. She said they are beautiful and is happy to see more people using the park and the courts. She said she has noticed some safety concerns. She said the center court is close to the street, and the ball comes over the fence. She said her neighbor's house, Ann Organist, 15 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, is three feet from the street. She said some balls have hit her storm door and windows. She said this has caused some distress with some damage to her home. Veglia said Organist is parking her car in front of her home as a "barrier" to keep the balls from hitting her house. She said the street is very narrow.

Mundie asked Veglia if extending the fence or putting a net there would help. Veglia said this is what she would like to recommend. She said kids also climb the fence once the ball goes over the fence. Mundie said a nylon net can last forever and keep the balls from going over the fence. Veglia said it can be a "pretty easy" fix. Mundie said the fence can also be extended upward or a putting a net there. Veglia said city council can, maybe, consider this for an improvement and put this on their agenda for further discussion. Mayor Cusat said he has had this discussion in his office and has looked into this. He said, as at the Pine Street Playground, a soccer net was put around the fence. He said this is extremely expensive. Mayor Cusat said this is over 100 feet long and 20 feet high. Perry said, "whatever works". Mundie asked if a nylon net would work. He said it would only be this section of the fence. Veglia asked if the fence can be raised about three feet. Mundie asked Veglia, "three feet by how many feet across". Veglia said the width of two basketball courts, she is not sure; she is not a "sports person". Mundie said Veglia can use his tennis net. Barletta asked Mayor Cusat if the City can fix the middle court that is causing problems. Mayor Cusat said they could but does not know if this will work. Mundie asked if there can be a nylon netting put up. Perry stated there needs to be two poles installed with a net across this area only. Mayor Cusat stated it needs to be constructed as at a baseball game, as a foul ball fence. He said there needs to be poles with a tension wire stretched. He said he wanted to replace the netting at the Pine Street Playground. He said it would cost about \$22,000 for replacement which went "all around the hockey ring." Mayor Cusat said it would cost the City about \$10,000-\$15,000 for the nylon net to block this side of the street. He stated for this height it is a lot of money. Mundie said the neighbors that are around the playgrounds should be helped and the City should accommodate them. He stated these residents have owned there house forever. He said they should not be subject to a ball coming into their yard or hitting their house. Perry said there is also a light issue. Mundie suggested having the City engineer looking at this issue. Barletta asked how tall the fence is "there". Perry stated

about 10-12 feet. Mundie said it needs to be extended another three feet. Mayor Cusat said he does not know how to extend a metal fence without putting a net over the top. Mundie said that is why the City has “smart” engineers to figure this out. He said they can figure out how it would not cost “a whole lot of money”. Mayor Cusat said the City is in the middle of a comprehensive recreation study and this can be added to it. He said they can see what the feasibility is and what can be done. Barletta said when looking online, people are adding a fence to this part. She asked if a fence can be added to this part; extra fencing “so the balls do not go over.” Perry stated this is a “war zone”. Veglia asked if the poles can be extended. Frank Vito, Department of Public Works Director, said his employees will need to “go down” and look at the fence to see what they “come up with”. Barletta asked Veglia to leave her telephone number with the city clerk so the City can contact her after their evaluation. Perry said Vito and his employees will address this issue and get city council and administration an answer.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat stated he still stands by his decision on delinquent taxes. He said he understands them better than anyone. He stated the City has saved over \$60,000/year due to not selling the delinquent taxes. He said because most people do not understand this process, it was not a bad decision.

**Comments from City Administrator:** None.

**Comments from Council:** Barletta asked Mayor Cusat how the City is preparing for the coronavirus. She said the school district is restricting people who are traveling, outside the country, to returning to school for 14 days. Mayor Cusat stated he is washing his hands. He said the City’s employees; fire and police departments cannot do anything. He said the DPW Department has no interaction with the public. He said most employees who have interaction, with the public, at City Hall are behind glass walls. He said all the employees are protected except the mayor’s assistant and Jessica Medina, city administrator’s secretary. Mayor Cusat said if anyone has called for a meeting this has been “put off”. Perry asked if the police are doing anything extra to protect themselves. Mayor Cusat said the police sanitize themselves. Barletta asked if the cleaning is being “stepped-up” in the police department. Mayor Cusat said there is no interaction, in the police offices, except for inter-departmental employees. He said no employees have brought any concerns to him. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if the City has a policy if a person would travel outside the country and come back to the US. Mayor Cusat said the City does not have any large functions. He said city council meetings is the biggest function in the City. He stated if a resident does not feel safe to stay out of the public and stay home. He said this is up to the individual. Mayor Cusat stated he is not the “school district” where there are a large number of students put in one group. He said he is not an organization where a basketball game would put thousands of people together. Mundie said the Hazleton School District is meeting tonight to decide about the situation in the schools. Perry asked if Mayor Cusat was meeting with any governmental officials. He said he is meeting with government officials on March 12, 2020, at a summit, in Wilke-Barre.

Lynch stated the “own is” is a lot more on the school’s due to the children with close contact with other kids. He said they may not be diligent in washing their hands. He said if your kids would get it, the parents would also get it. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat said if there is a plan if someone “shows up” with the coronavirus in the City. Mayor Cusat said if someone has the coronavirus in Hazleton, they will be taken to the hospital. He said it will be “on the hospital” to keep them quarantined. Mundie said the hospital would take them to a “special place” because these patients are not put in the hospital. Mayor Cusat said City Hall would not handle this. Mundie said he knows vans that travel, in Hazleton, go back and forth to New York, New Jersey and Stroudsburg. Barletta stated Luzerne County has had a press conference and has stepped up their cleaning procedures. She asked Mayor Cusat to keep city council updated on all changes. Mayor Cusat said the summit will begin at 12:00 noon on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Wilkes-Barre on Pennsylvania Avenue and invited all city council member to attend.

Barletta asked Mayor Cusat regarding the Altamont Building and the grants. Mayor Cusat said the grants are "tied-to" certain types of housing. He said they are looking for market value. He said they are not going for this type of housing. He said this is a new owner and does not know if the sale took place. He stated there is work being done.

Sacco asked about the old St. Joseph Medical Center building. Mayor Cusat said he sent out more Notice of Violations (NOV's). Sacco asked if there is a certain amount of time if they do not answer if it goes "up for grabs again".

Pedri stated the St. Joseph building has a new owner with an attorney from Wilkes-Barre handling this; the same attorney as before. He said he gave them four months to do something and did not hear anything. He said they are starting their NOV's. Pedri said the first time it was sold, he got \$19,000 in fines, the second time it was sold, he received \$8,000 in fines. He said, hopefully, he will not get any more money in fines, and something will be done with this property. Pedri said there is a restrictive covenant on it when it was sold. He said it cannot be used as a hospital or a nursing home. He said he explained, to Attorney Frank Hegins, if someone can come in and go to Lehigh Valley to see if this provision can be "waved". He said there is no funding or investors and is starting the notice of violation process.

Colombo asked Ralph Sharp, Hazleton Public Transit Authority Director, if he is doing anything special with the buses. Sharp stated his staff is disinfecting their buses more frequently and also cleaning the benches in the facility, by maintenance, more often. He said there is hand sanitizer throughout the building and doing everything necessary.

Colombo told residents to take extra precautions. He suggested residents not to go to work or school if they are sick. Colombo said a few colleges have closed. He said banks may be closed because the money is contaminated. He said we will all get through this. He said he wished Lehigh Valley Hospital would "drop this" and let a hospital come into the old St. Joseph Medical building. He said the City needs another hospital. Perry stated this should have been done ten years ago.

Perry thanked Frank Vito and the DPW workers for all their work in cleaning up the streets in the Heights Section of the City. He said the roads are now ready to be paved.

**Comments from Junior Council:** None.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.