

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2022**

Council met for a WORK SESSION on Tuesday, February 8, 2022, in Council Chambers and via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The WORK SESSION began at 6:25 p.m.

In attendance were City Council President James Perry, Anthony Colombo, Jack Mundie and Mark Ondishin. City Officials present were Mayor Cusat, Atty. Sean Logsdon, Police Chief Brian Schoonmaker, Fire Chief Donald Leshko, Joe Zeller, Ralph Sharp and Dan Lynch.

Perry stated there will be discussion on leasing parking spaces in the City. He said this is a re-occurring theme.

Mayor Cusat said after every snowstorm, people call in complaints that they shoveled out their parking spot and someone parked there. He said there were 85-, 86- and 70-year-old residents calling and sending letters to City Hall. Mayor Cusat told them he will bring this matter back up to city council and move forward. Perry asked how many people applied for this in the past. Mayor Cusat said John Simcovich, City Parking office employee, stated there were about 50 applications from the last time. Mayor Cusat said the City could try this for one year. Perry said some people are mentioning to wait until the Comprehensive Plan. He said Mayor Cusat said this cannot occur on certain streets. Perry said if a person dies, how is the City going to keep track of the signs. Mayor Cusat said when the City does a business license, when an inspection, is done, they put a sticker on them. He stated the business signs are growing with over 400 handicapped signs given out this year. He said they are going to put a sticker on back, of the signs, to show they are valid. Perry said they should not put more work on the Code Department. Mayor Cusat said the Parking Department is, currently, handling these. Perry asked if there could be hangar, on the car, as opposed to putting a sign, in the ground. Mayor Cusat asked how a resident would know not to park there without a sign placed. Perry said no parking at a corner, handicapped and private signs, there, maybe, ten signs, on one block. He stated these signs could be knocked over. Mayor Cusat said there is a maximum of six signs per block. He stated there are a minimum of two, with the streets that are swept, should have three signs. Ondishin asked if a resident pays for a spot and someone parks in it. Mayor Cusat said it is the same as if someone parks in front of your garage or driveway. He said it also follows the same rules as handicapped, business, garage door or a driveway. Perry asked if the fee would be \$120.00 year. Mayor Cusat said yes. He said it is \$10.00/month. He said the first year would be "pro-rated". Perry stated they would need some public input. Colombo agreed. He said this should be discussed at a WORK SESSION. Mayor Cusat said the City probably could not do it, this year, but put this out to the public and "plot" it out. He said there are a total of 1,400 blocks in the City. He said with four sides "each", 5,600 total, there is a lot of real estate in the City. He stated there are 10,000 properties in the City. Perry asked who would handle the enforcement. Mayor Cusat said the Parking Department. Ralph Sharp, Parking Department Director, said Tracy and Scott would, also, enforce this. He said Scott goes around constantly, checks on businesses if the paid for their parking sign, and on handicapped signs. Sharp said he has a sheet to mark off all signs. He said the City is taking care of this. Mayor Cusat said they gave Scott tools to take any illegal signs down. He said the resident would then have to pay a re-installation fee. He said this eliminates the DPW being called. Mundie said the ACT 47 Recovery Plan stated that the City would need to have a parking study done. Mayor Cusat said the Parking Study was, already, done. He said there are certain streets that parking is only allowed, on one side, - i.e.- Cedar Street. He said if a resident would want one, on these streets, they would be given have a parking space on the side streets. He stated corner lots are another problem. He said the two end spaces would have to be measured. Mayor Cusat stated this how handicapped signs are determined. Perry said this may force more people into the alleys. Mayor Cusat stated there will be the same number of vehicles, but some residents will have a

guaranteed spot. Perry asked if there are any restrictions on these signs. Mayor Cusat said there could only be one per property. He said if a resident has a driveway, in front of their house, they will not get one. He said this property, already, takes 40 lineal feet in the City. Mayor Cusat said there could be a maximum of ten properties in a City block. He said every house should have a 20-foot-wide parking space. He stated there, also, needs to be a certain amount of feet from the fire hydrant. Mundie said he would like this program, to work, but this may start a war with people. He said if someone from out of state parks in this spot, he said this would cause trouble. Mundie stated he sees problems with this program. He said he does not see any other City doing this or has done before. He said he knows Mayor Cusat wants to be a "trend-setter". He said if the City gets 2,000 applications, it could be a problem, but if they only get 300, then, it won't be. Perry asked if Police Chief Schoonmaker sees any problems. Police Chief Schoonmaker (*inaudible*). Mundie said some neighborhoods want reserved parking. Ondishin said he lived on James and Maple Streets and went through this living there. Police Chief Schoonmaker (*inaudible*). Perry said if residents have a garage or off-street parking, they cannot get a handicapped spot in the City. Mundie said it may work in some parts, of the City, and in some, it may not work.

Perry asked if the City's Land Bank is looking for more parking. Mayor Cusat said the new Land Bank board takes over, this week, and hopes they have the same vision he has. He said the board is made-up of several real estate agents. He said, hopefully, they could buy properties and "flip" them. He said the property on Spruce and Cedar, vacant for so many years, is, currently, full at \$40.00/spot. Ralph Sharp stated parking is an issue throughout the City. Perry said some applications may not qualify. Mayor Cusat said for a handicapped application, it is limited to two per block. He said some blocks are a lot longer than others. He said if a resident asks why they were denied, the City goes out to see if they could help the person without doing too much damage to the area. Perry stated there are more renters and owners in the City. He asked if there is land that the HCA has that was supposed to be given to the City. He asked if this is usable for parking. Perry stated this is in the Master Agreement with the HCA. Zeller said he has to check on this. Mayor Cusat said he met with the HCA today. He said there is less than 18 months left in the City of Hazleton's ACT 47 Recovery Plan. Perry said the City has, accomplished, almost all items suggested in the plan. Mayor Cusat said almost everything is done, and this is one of the last things. Perry said Home Rule was, also, included in the plan. Mayor Cusat said the government study is a long process. Perry stated this should not "hold-up" the City from getting out of ACT 47. Mayor Cusat agreed. Perry stated the City got rid of all the nuisance taxes. Mayor Cusat stated the City of Hazleton will be the most successful story once it is over. Perry said if the City puts it out there, in the "proper terms". Mayor Cusat asked if they need to construct a resolution or just put it "out there". Atty. Logsdon said they could make an announcement. Colombo said the City could announce it, like they did with the new City Zoning Ordinance and map. Mayor Cusat said the newspaper could put a story in paper. Mayor Cusat said the form is almost the same as the handicapped application. He stated the request needs to come from the owner of the building/property. Colombo asked if this could only be used on City streets only. He asked if a spot could be rented on Diamond Avenue or Broad Street because they are state routes. Mayor Cusat said the City, currently, has business and handicapped signs on Broad Street. Atty. Logsdon stated he would need to check with PENN DOT on this. Mayor Cusat said there is a meter at every spot and cannot see why they are collecting revenue. He said, obviously, there is no parking on Route 309. He said where there is parking allowed, they would be able to. Colombo asked if there were parking spots being rented at First and Diamond Avenue at the Hookah Lounge. Donald Leshko, Hazleton Fire Chief, stated if you google any cities, Harrisburg and Allentown, they are doing parking permits. Mayor Cusat said a lot of the cities do it per block. He said the City cannot force a business to do this. He stated this is a zoning issue and had to put this into their stipulations. Mayor Cusat said he will talk to Sam Galski, Standard Speaker news reporter, to put a "blurb" out there. He said this does not supersede the City snow ban, utility work, and street cleaning. He said then the resident could move their car back after the work is complete.

Paul Neyhart, Junior Council member, said he thinks a \$50.00 fee is good, but Mayor Cusat's suggestion of a monthly fee is even better. He asked how this does not supersede the snow ban. Neyhart stated the resident would still be paying for these spots. Mayor Cusat said it would be the same as the snow is pushed, to one side, once the storm is over, clean out the spot, park the vehicle 12 inches, from the curb,

the resident could go right back into their spot. Neyhart stated guest parking and holidays with family members parking in their spots. Perry said residents still put out chairs to save a parking spot. Perry asked what the sign would say. Mayor Cusat said it would state, "Parking for 123 Alter Street". He stated this is the only address to call in the complaint. Atty. Logsdon stated it could cut down on the discourtesy. He said if someone shoveled out a spot, instead of a confrontation, all they need to do is grab their cell phone and call the complaint in. Ondishin said if the program does not work, the City could stop doing it. Perry stated it would be hard to "pull it back" once it is instituted. Mayor Cusat said either the Hazleton Police or Parking Departments would handle this, mostly parking during the day. Perry said they would also handle all the paperwork. Ondishin said they need to get some input from the public. Atty. Logsdon said the concept is very similar to the City of Wilkes-Barre and their placards. Mayor Cusat said the City's zones are 22 feet. He said people would have to know how big the space is. He stated everyone wants to park "car door to front door". He said if the green sign is there, residents are parked "nose" up, to this, it be measured, accordingly, and would save spots. Perry asked if most zoned parking has a tag. Police Chief Schoonmaker (*inaudible*). Atty. Logsdon said it would be on the "ownness" on the owner to report any violations in their spots. Mayor Cusat said this would follow the ordinance. He stated Code Enforcement follows the ordinance to "a tee". Perry said the City would need to make sure these signs are put in the right spot. Mayor Cusat said they will have to go and measure them out; 20 feet from the corner then "20 feet, then 20 feet". He said he and Allison walked every meter, measured them, and moved every single hole to make sure they were legal parking spots.

Bob Yevak, 1011 North Locust Street, said he is really involved in Jim Thorpe. He stated one month ago, on Broadway, in the downtown, the city officials went to every tenant, that lives all the way up Broadway, and let them buy a sticker and a sign to park. Yevak said all the apartments are empty because there is no parking there. He said they would receive a \$50.00 fine. He said the neighbors started parking in their friends parking places and was horrible. He stated they ran into so many problems. He said then, the police would tow the cars away. Mayor Cusat asked if they put specific spots in Jim Thorpe. Yevak said everyone got an assigned spot, with stickers, in front of their homes. Ondishin stated this is why they need input from everybody. He said it will still, eliminate, a lot of fighting.

Perry stated the old St. Joseph Medical Center lot has a lot of spaces for parking. He said the owner could lease the land to the City. Mayor Cusat said he has an upcoming meeting with the owner.

Perry adjourned the WORK SESSION meeting at 6:58 p.m.