

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024**

**Call to Order:** Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m.

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

**Roll Call:** Bruno-present; Colombo-absent; Nilles-present; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:** The minutes of the January 23, 2024 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications:**

**1.PUBLIC HEARING-** The City of Hazleton conducted a public hearing on adopting proposed Zoning Map Amendments to change the zoning district from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to R-3 (High-Density Multi-Family) for the following properties:

1. Graham Bradley and Russell Trustees- 71U8NE4200301A000
2. Bognet, Frank & Lea- 71U8NE42002001000 and 71U8NE42002005000
3. Sicr TERRACE PROPERTIES- 71U8S1005007000
4. Powell, Thomas- 71U8NE42002004000
5. Reyes, Flores Mael- 71U8NE42002003000
6. Sanchez, Dominga- 71U8NE42002002000
7. Waschko, Kathryn- J7U8NE4200201A000
8. RED MILL HOLDINGS, LLC- 71T800A10A000
9. Seaman, Robert B., Pamela A.- 71U8S2001009000
10. Molesevich, Dennis- 71U800A001000

and to change the zoning district from R-2 (Medium Density Two-Family Residential) to R-3 (High Density Multi-Family) for the following properties:

**JP Realty Partners LP- 71U8NW32004010000, 71U8NW3200501A000, 71U8NW32005001000, 71U8NW3200501B000, 71U8NW32005002000, 71U8NW3200501C000 and 71U8NW33002001000.**  
**Graham Family Partners IV LP- 71U8NW33003001000**

Atty. Logsdon said there will be a first reading for Ordinance 2024-8. He said there were some amendments made to the ordinance. He said due to some changes to David Avenue, the ordinance will be changed. Mayor Cusat said the properties to be removed are properties 4,5,6 & 7. Atty. Logsdon said

the City of Hazleton Planning Commission recommended these properties be removed from the zoning map change. He said the updated, final zoning map, from the City engineer, will be ready at the end of this week, and will be presented at the next City Council meeting on March 12, 2024.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Dee Deakos, 43 Mine Street, Hazleton, said if the City has uncontrolled growth and higher density, the City will need more City services.

Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, asked if the City received any information from the City Water and Sewer Authorities regarding the zoning changes to townhouses. He said this will be another “layer of burden” on the distribution systems. He asked if the Hazleton Area School District had any input on what their impact would be on the school’s enrollment.

Atty. Logsdon said the Zoning Ordinance includes industrial spec buildings.

Dan Lynch said the switch of the Zoning Ordinance will not change any problems within the Hazleton Area school district. He said all school districts deal with residency problems.

Thomas Powell, Hazleton, asked what the owners of this land want to put there, and why the City is changing from R-1 to R-3 in this area. Perry said Allen Ridge is moving forward with their building plans. He asked why there would be three roads, and the creation of David Road, by Coxe Road, instead of one road. Mayor Cusat said with the ARP funding, there will be an infrastructure placed.

Mayor Cusat reviewed the proposed area for construction with a map presented to the public.

Don Ellis, 1436 Broad Street, Hazleton, said there is a road next to his driveway. He was told his property encroaches on this property by 17 feet. He said it has been there for over 60 years. He said he does not want any high-rise buildings next to his house.

Mayor Cusat said the City is trying to address the housing crisis and people living in unsafe places.

Ondishin asked if the City has done any studies in this area. Mayor Cusat stated Allen Ridge has done studies.

Perry stated if any resident has any concerns, they would need to attend the Hazleton City’s Planning Commission meetings.

**2. Willow Foundation Heartwood Center representatives to discuss applying for COVID-19 American Rescue Plan (ARP) PA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program grant through PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED).**

Kristen Topolski, Vice-President of the Willow Foundation, said the foundation operates the Heartwood Center, day shelter for people who are in risk of homelessness, in the greater Hazleton area. She said they are located in the old Boyle Funeral Home and, actively, rehabbing this property. She said they have life skill workshops, and partner with multiple social service agencies. Topolski said the need for a day shelter was a “pressing” need in the City. She said she discovered a multi-purpose grant opportunity. She said they are in need of doors and windows. Topolski said they also, have limited space. She said the foundation is allowed to apply for \$250,000 to \$2,000,000. She said the foundation was required to notify the City and Luzerne County of their intent to apply. She said they are actively getting estimates in for the windows and doors. They, also, will need a shower truck for people to take a shower. She said funding is at a critical point for the foundation.

Nilles asked how many people come “in and out of the facility” daily. A Willow Foundation representative said about 50-60 people daily. Nilles asked the facility’s hours of operation. Topolski said the foundation’s hours of operation are 8 a.m.- 6 p.m., seven days a week, with a hot breakfast and lunch. Nilles asked if anyone lives there overnight. Topolski said no, people stay overnight at the Catholic Social Services facility.

Topolski said the foundation will, also, request a Luzerne County grant.

**Bid Opening:** None

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, said he hopes the new City Zoning amended map is presented, to the public, at the next council meeting.

Rabo spoke of Resolution 2024-8- Appointment to the Planning Commission. He said he hoped City Council scrutinized the new appointment, and other applicants being appointed, because they “fumbled the ball” on the Zoning Department appointment.

Rabo spoke of Resolution 2024-9 A Resolution Approving the Sewage Facilities Planning Module for the Allen Ridge Associates, LLC. He asked if this will be included in the City Zoning Ordinance and in the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Rabo spoke of Resolution 2024-10- A Resolution Approving the Land Development and Stormwater Maintenance Agreements for Northpoint Development, LLC. He asked if the Hazleton Sewer Authority coordinated any changes with the City.

Rabo said a City Redevelopment plan should be undertaken, along with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Ted Sherrock, Hazleton, spoke of the Allen Ridge project. He said the Hazleton Joint Sewer Authority passed an extensive resolution that Allen Ridge needs to follow. He stated DEP is on their back “tremendously”. He said they finished up their “EDU’s” and trying to increase them.

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**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

**ORDINANCES:**

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

**ORDINANCE 2024-8**

An Ordinance Amending the City of Hazleton Zoning Ordinance of 2021, as Amended and the Official Zoning Map Dated August 2021, as Amended, to Revise the Official Zoning Map to Change the Zoning District on Property Located from R-1 TO R-3 AND R-2 TO R-3  
**(1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Perry.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon said City Council needs to make a motion to amend the ordinance to remove properties 4,5,6 & 7.

**MOTION TO REMOVE FROM TABLE:**

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Nilles.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-absent; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

**MOTION TO REMOVE FROM TABLE PASSES 4-0**

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**MOTION TO AMEND:**

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Bruno.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-absent; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

**MOTION TO AMEND PASSES 4-0**

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Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Perry

**Roll Call (As Amended):** Bruno-yes; Colombo-absent; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

**ORDINANCE PASSES 4-0 AS AMENDED**

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

None

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**RESOLUTIONS:**

**Resolution 2024-8** Appointment to the Planning Commission -Robert Collado

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Nilles

**On the Question:**

Mr. Collado stated it is an honor and is thankful for the opportunity to serve on the City Planning Commission. He said he previously worked with the Hazleton Downtown Alliance for Progress, is a board member for the Art League and the Hazleton Public Library. He, also, works with the Hazleton Chamber of Commerce

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-absent; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES 4-0**

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**Resolution 2024-9**

A Resolution Approving the Sewage Facilities Planning Module for the Allen Ridge Associates, LLC

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Nilles.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon said the original resolution is in a DEP format but changed the resolution to the Hazleton City version. He said the wording is "exactly the same".

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-absent; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES 4-0**

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**Resolution 2024-10**

A Resolution Approving the Land Development and Stormwater Maintenance Agreements for Northpoint Development, LLC

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon said City Council needs to make an amendment to the resolution. He said there is a name change in the project.

Brian Stahl, Northpoint Development representative, said the development agreement is the contract between the City and Northpoint Development. He said Northpoint Development is obligated to maintain their stormwater basins. Stahl said Northpoint Development is getting ready to start work the second week of March, 2024. He said DEP needs to "wrap up" their review of the project. He said there is a total of a six-building plan- three buildings in the City, and three buildings in Hazle Township.

Atty. Logsdon said they will make the name changes to the LLC, and a conditional approval for Northpoint Development to get started on their project.

**Roll Call:** Bruno-yes; Colombo-absent; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

### **RESOLUTION PASSES 4-0 AS AMENDED**

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**New Business:** 1. Mayor Cusat stated the City is looking at making Poplar Street safer for people trying to cross. He said he reached out to PENN DOT to put in a center, turning lane and to do a traffic study on Buttonwood and Poplar to put in stop signs. He said after the study, the study concluded that a stop sign does not meet requirements for this area. Mayor Cusat said there is no City ordinance that allows perpendicular parking in this area. He stated PENN DOT will do the street painting of the center line to change this area to a three-line system if the City adopts an ordinance allowing for a 45 degree angle parking and the City does the street striping on the parking first. Mayor Cusat said PENN DOT will do their work in May, 2024.

2. Mayor Cusat said the City has adopted guidelines and a timeline for any LSA grant requests in the City. He said the same organizations are putting in for grants, and the grants are not being fully funded, with some grants not being funded at all. Perry stated the grant applications would go through the Planning Commission and Community Development office.

Nilles asked when the new system would start. Mayor Cusat stated soon. He said he will send City Council a list of projects not funded by the City. Perry asked if there is a timeline to use the money. Zeller stated three years.

Atty. Logsdon said the deadline for all LSA grants is September 30<sup>th</sup> yearly. He said the City will put time tables on everything and will make it fair for all organizations who will complete their projects.

Mayor Cusat said in 2023, there were ten LSA grants awarded, but only one project was fully funded.

Mayor Cusat stated, in 2022, the Hazleton Fire Department needed “turn-out” gear and breathing apparatus. He said the City received \$100,000 in grants, and the City needed to come up with the rest of the money, and raised taxes to purchase the equipment.

Mayor Cusat asked City Council to look over this information. He said City administration will have the Poplar Street parking ordinance ready for the next Council meeting.

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**Old Business:** None

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**Comments from the Audience:** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, said the City always needs maps of the City streets drawn up.

Rabo spoke on the LSA grants. He said Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority deals with the outlying areas and municipalities. He stated if the organization does not fulfill their agreement for the LSA grants, they need to disclose the amount.

Linda DeAndrea, North Lee Court, said she had to call 911, twice, for her neighbors. She said one time it was for parking in front of her house. She said there is a No Parking sign in front of her house, but they still do not abide by this.

DeAndrea said the second 911 call was for a loud kid party. She asked if the woman police officer was intimidated by the kids. She gave them a warning. Police Chief Schoonmaker said there would a loss of a license would be for consuming alcohol, and not for a loud party.

Ryan Bender, 161 Bender Lane, Weatherly, said he is representing All American Girls Softball, being in Hazleton for 43 years at the Hayes and 19<sup>th</sup> Street field. He said their lease was not renewed this past year. He said they have been self-funded. He said All American Girls Softball was associated with Hazleton Little League. He said he partnered with Hazleton Little League for the girls to play with other city teams. He said All American Softball League has about 95 girls playing softball.

Joe Draushak said All American is one of the few City organizations that maintain a city park and self-funds the upgrades to the field. Draushak said All American Softball put all the needed drainage systems, flagpole, dugouts, concession stand, and equipment shed. He said All American Softball League wants to stay at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street field. Draushak said All American Softball League and Hazleton Little League are two separate entities.

Atty. Logsdon asked if they could contact Frank Stish, City of Hazleton Athletic Director for Parks and Recreation. Draushak said Stish never gets back to him. Draushak said Hazleton Little League is posting on Facebook and social media that they "have the field".

Mayor Cusat said the City has not renewed leases with any City organization. He said any official league could sit with Frank Stish and a schedule could be worked out. Mayor Cusat said the City is trying to expand sports in the City.

Ted Tobias, Board Member of Hazleton Little League, said Draushak never followed the procedure because he wanted a lease. Tobias said Hazleton Little League filled out the on-line registration and followed the rules. Tobias stated the girls would not lose their home. He said Hazleton Little League is expanding girls' softball to the 17<sup>th</sup> Street field.

Mayor Cusat said the City cannot get involved in two leagues fighting. Perry stated all parties involved need to talk with Frank Stish.

Mayor Cusat said in the City's Comprehensive Plan, there are plans to put a smaller non-adult field at Columbus Park.

Tobias said Hazleton Little League is not turning any girls away.

Sandra Bender said her concern was a league focusing on girls to "shine". She said the boy's leagues get more funding. That is why they left Hazleton Little League and went to the All American girls Softball League. She said they also work with the special needs (Challenger) League.

Draushak said All American said they do not want to lose their only field.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat said the “Rock at the Mountain” is scheduled at City View Park this summer for a three-concert series. Three local bands will be opening for three tribute bands. He stated there will be five major events, in 22 days, at City View Park.

Mayor Cusat said the new tax bills will be going out next week. He said the new bills will have six monthly payment options with an extra 60 days without any penalty phase.

**Comments from City Administrator:** Lynch said Berkheimer Tax Office sent a letter to some City residents regarding the total amount of EIT tax which an employer “holds”. He said the amount Berkheimer stated was .625%, which is the ACT 205 reduction, for Hazleton residents. He said this letter, also, includes the school district rate. Lynch said City residents need to file their local taxes next year.

**Comments from Council:** Bruno said to keep Tony Colombo in their thoughts and prayers due to his recent illness.

Ondishin said he caught some “flack” over the Berkheimer Tax bills that were sent out.

Ondishin thanked Police Chief Schoonmaker for putting a speed trap by his house.

Perry asked Mayor Cusat if there is a pothole hotline. Mayor Cusat said there is a text number to report City potholes.

Perry said there will be a meeting scheduled to update all City officials on the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

**Comments from Junior Council:** None

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.