

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:19 p.m.

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

Roll Call: Bruno-present; Colombo-present(via telephone); Nilles-present; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the February 27, 2024 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, Hazleton spoke of Ordinance 2024-8. She said she wanted to speak on the R-3 the City wanted to create “all over town”. She said she does not see the City changing the density in housing, even in the increased City population.

Deakos, also, spoke of Resolution 2024-13. She asked Mayor Cusat if people would need to pay to use the miniature golf course. Mayor Cusat said the miniature golf course will be run by a private entity.

David Fatula, 105 Mark Road, Hazleton, spoke of Ordinance 2024-8. Fatula asked if anyone, other than Red Mill, is involved in the re-zoning issue, has come to the City and asked to re-zone their land. Perry said no. Fatula stated the reason the City is doing the “re-zoning” is the City did not be accused of “spot” zoning. Mayor Cusat said the City is looking to building townhome instead of buildings. He asked why the Allen Ridge property is being changed from R-1 to R-3. Atty. Logsdon said the R-3 turned into R-1 but they asked to be turned back to R-3. Perry stated it is considered “reverse” zoning because single family homes should not be placed on Club Forty Road. Fatula said the R-3 between Terrace Blvd. and Broad Street is not a “fit” for these types of homes. Perry said this would need to go to the Hazleton Planning Commission for their vote. He said everything should not be “blanketed” R-3 unless there was a plan.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

None

(2ND AND 3RD READINGS)

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
(2nd READING)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

On the Question:

The re-zoned map was presented to the public.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-no; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES 4-1

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2024-11

A Resolution Authorizing the Pennsylvania Theatre of Performing Arts to Award Bids for the Facility Improvements Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Perry stated this resolution includes all LSA money. Mayor Cusat said this is for approval to award the bid. Atty. Logsdon said this resolution is the incorrect one included. He said the last paragraph before, "Now, Therefore, Be It Hereby Resolved" should be removed. He said City Council will need to make an amendment to the resolution to take this information out.

MOTION TO AMEND:

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Perry.

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

MOTION TO AMEND PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Roll Call (AS AMENDED): Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY AS AMENDED

Resolution 2024-12

Resolution Approving a Local Share Account (LSA) Grant Request and Approval Policy for the City of Hazleton

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Perry asked what, “LSA grant in the past 3 rounds, are ineligible to apply” means. Mayor Cusat said 3 rounds mean 3 years. Mayor Cusat said during COVID, two years were “bunched” together, and used rounds instead of years. He said the City sent and is working with DCED on their comments on this policy. Mayor Cusat said if the funds are not used, the money would go back to the state. The City is not getting fully funded, and then the City needs to increase taxes. Mayor Cusat said the project manager would need to go the Planning Commission for their approval letter. He said there are very few grants not fully funded, and a lot are “estimates” for their project. He said City Council should not have the pressure of reviewing an LSA grant request at the last minute. He said the City did not get fully funded for the Hazleton Fire Department turnout gear. He said this money could come out of the general fund.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2024-13

Amending Resolution 2023-58 -Requesting Local Share Account (LSA) Statewide Funds for Hazleton City for Projects and Improvements at City View Park, Amending the type of LSA Grant in Resolution 2023-58, Passed for this Same Project

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said, in 2023, the City passed the LSA for City View Park, in the amount of about \$500,000. He said this is why the City is amending Resolution 2023-58 due to more funding needed. He said the Luzerne County LSA grant is not capped at \$1,000,000. He said this is why the City is asking for more money.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2024-14

Amending Resolution 2022-29- Authorizing the Pennsylvania Theatre of Performing Arts to Award Bids for the Facility Improvements Project, amending and rescinding the award of Bid 4 for a new LED Cabinet Sign to Redmont Sign dba. Stewart Signs

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Sean Logsdon stated this will be a “stand-alone” resolution. He said the PA Theatre of Performing Arts is no longer awarding the bid for the LED Cabinet sign. Nilles asked if the PTPA is mounting this sign on the building. Atty. Logsdon stated yes.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

New Business: 1. Bruno said a lot more City residents are putting inside furniture on their front porches. He said the City has not taken care of this. Perry asked if this falls under the new Quality of Life Ordinance. Atty. Logsdon said yes. He said the City resident would receive a Quality of Life citation or ticket. He said it is an International Property Maintenance Code violation. Atty. Logsdon said the Code Department could handle this any way they “see fit”.

2. Perry said there are a lot of boarding houses in the City. He asked how the City could handle this. He stated there are multiple people living in one house. Atty. Logsdon said this is considered a zoning violation. Mayor Cusat said the City would be unable to enter a house, but could send a notice of violation. Perry said they will need to talk to Charlie Pedri, Director of Zoning.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, said it is good the City is speaking of putting limits on certain things.

Deakos spoke of the parking behind City Hall. She said the parking lines are going in both directions. Mayor Cusat said the parking lines were changed for the Hazleton Police Department to pull in their police vehicles. He said a car could pull in from Green Street and exit onto Maple Street. Deakos asked if the City could change the parking lines back to where they were. Mayor Cusat said the handicapped parking still has straight lines to park.

Comments from Mayor: Mayor Cusat said some repairs made to the Hazleton Parking Garage, from 2012 or 2013, are failing. He said there is concrete falling from the ceiling. He said until the City engineer report is received, the garage will be closed. Mayor Cusat said the City will send this out for bid to have it repaired. He said there are about 86 paid parking spots in the garage and the City has these vehicles parking, currently, on Chestnut, Wyoming Street, and the YMCA parking lots. He said it is not in danger of collapsing.

Mayor Cusat said the City will have to look at parking in City alleys and courts again. He said some alleys are narrower than 18 feet. He said, this winter season, the City plow trucks had a hard time getting through them.

Mayor Cusat said there are parking “sticks” that municipalities could put out on a City corner, by fire hydrants, or anywhere the City wants to put them. The company installs them for free and receives part of the fine. Atty. Logsdon said the City could do a parking study to see where these “sticks” should be placed.

Mayor Cusat said the owners, of the vacant lot on Mine and Broad Street, has stopped using this a parking lot. He said this was discussed with the owner, and the City may re-acquire this property.

Mayor Cusat said this is the first day Luzerne County offices moved into City Hall. He said there is a metal detector being used, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 8 a.m.-4:00 p.m., when Luzerne County employees are at City Hall.

Mayor Cusat stated the Easter Bunny Trail will be at City View Park on March 24th @ 1:00 p.m.

Mayor Cusat said he did not have time to work on the Poplar Street Ordinance.

Mayor Cusat said there will be a ribbon cutting on Thursday, March 21st at City Hall for Luzerne County moving into City Hall.

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: Nilles asked about the status of the erection of a stop sign on Buttonwood & Wyoming Streets, going east. Mayor Cusat stated to legally put a stop sign in, in needs to be a within so many feet of the intersection. He said the stop sign cannot be erected due to the angle of the railroad tracks. Ondishin asked if there could be a “CAUTION” sign put in this area. Mayor Cusat said, in the other direction, an “Opposing traffic does not stop” sign could be placed. He said a traffic study, done on Poplar and Buttonwood Streets, by Holy Rosary Church, conducted by PENN DOT, does not qualify for a stop sign.

Nilles asked if there is anything going on with the old Blue Comet property. Mayor Cusat said it is listed for private sale.

Perry asked about the project at the old Altamont Building. Mayor Cusat said the building was supposed to be ready for March, 2024. He said there is an issue with “charging the electrical with PP&L”. He said it is almost finished in the inside of the building.

Ondishin asked about the status of the speed bump at Altmiller Playground. Mayor Cusat said the City ordered temporary speed bumps, but have not arrived yet.

Ondishin asked if the water company will repair the roads that they dug up. Mayor Cusat said yes, as the City ordinance requires. He said, by law, the City needs to meet with the utility companies for their plans for next year, before the end of April.

Nilles stated City residents are complaining about the long light at 5th & Church Streets. He asked Mayor Cusat if they could check the timing on this traffic light.

Ondishin asked about the status of the old St. Joseph building. Mayor Cusat said he has met with the developers to “guide” them through the process, but nothing has been presented to the City. Ondishin stated the intersection of Wyoming and Holly Streets is very unsafe. Perry said, also, 9th & Carson Streets is a bad area.

Perry thanked Jessica from the Hazleton Police Department for collecting prom dresses for the City girls. She said she collected over 300 prom gowns.

Perry stated at the next City Council meeting, a draft of the Hazleton Area Comprehensive Plan will be presented by Shannon of Hailstone Economics.

Colombo thanked City Council, Mayor Cusat and all for all their thoughts and prayers during his recent hospital stay.

Colombo said there will be an Easter Dinner in the City through Mayor Cusat’s foundation. Any City resident could call Holy Annunciation Church to have the dinner delivered on March 27th. Colombo wished everyone a Happy Easter.

Comments from Junior Council: Perry stated City Council will try to invite them to any City ribbon cuttings.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.