

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2025**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m.

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

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

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the January 14, 2025 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): Mark Rabo, 1st Street, Hazleton, said he wanted to make a clarification from the previous meeting. He stated for the Optional Plan, under DCED regulations, the study commission would have nine months to complete the plan. If going from the Optional Plan to the Home Rule Plan, the City would have eighteen months to complete this plan.

Rabo said he found a grant program that the City of Lancaster used to reduce the study commission cost by fifty percent, but the City would have to match the fifty percent. He asked where the funding would come from. Rabo stated it would, likely, come out of the General Fund account. Rabo said Luzerne County inserted, in their charter, that debt service would have to be paid before any other expense, prior to the budget. He suggested the City should consider this in the new charter.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

None

(2ND READINGS)

Ordinance 2025-1

An Ordinance of the Hazleton City Council Placing a Government Study Commission Question on the 2025 Primary Election Ballot and Designating the Number of Members to Serve on Said Commission **(2nd READING)**

On the Question:

Perry asked Dan Lynch if the funding would come “out of the funding” for the commission, whatever that would be. Lynch stated he does not anticipate any problem with this. Perry asked if the commission members would get paid. Mayor Cusat said no. Perry asked if this question would be on the City’s primary ballot. Atty. Logsdon said yes, the primary 2025 ballot. He said people would have to sign up to be appointed to the commission. Mayor Cusat said it is the same process as City Council.

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES 4-0

Ordinance 2025-2

An Ordinance Authorizing the Erection of Stop Signs and Creating a 4-way Stop at the Intersection of Ferrara Avenue and Terrace Boulevard **(2nd READING)**

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Nilles.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES 4-0

RESOLUTIONS:

None

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Comments from the Audience: Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, Hazleton, asked the status of the Department of Justice lawsuit against the City. Atty. Logsdon stated the lawsuit is still active, and proceeding in the Scranton Middle District. Deakos stated she read the lawsuit, and the federal numbers are “off”. She stated the City should win this lawsuit.

Deakos asked why there are two City police officers at this City Council meeting. She said it is very excessive. Police Chief Schoonmaker stated these two police officers were riding “together” and were the two officers available to come to the meeting.

Mark Rabo, 1st Street, Hazleton, spoke of “lifting the cap” on the City’s EIT tax. He said, once the Study Commission members are sworn in, the City cannot cancel the study commission. Mayor Cusat said he was not referring to this. He said the City could stop the process here, with City Council, on the second reading.

Rabo spoke of President Trump, possibly, eliminating FEMA. He said if this happened, PEMA would take over. Atty. Logsdon said it is too early to see what the City’s response would be. He said the City would coordinate with Luzerne County when the time comes.

James Esposito, Standard-Speaker reporter, asked when the study commission does happen, would it be funded by the General Fund. Lynch said yes. Esposito asked when the seven people chosen, for the study commission, would be chosen by petition. Perry stated they would be put on the ballot. Esposito

spoke of President Trump, maybe, eliminating funds, grants, and community block development grants. He asked how City Council and administration feels about this. Mayor Cusat said the City receives \$685,000 from CDBG. He said the City would have to evaluate the projects that are funded, already, and evaluate the programs involved. He said there is one Community Development employee, and one consultant. He said the money is utilized for "low-mod" areas in the City.

Comments from Mayor: Mayor Cusat said a sewer project will be starting, shortly, on the southside of Hazleton, by Buttonwood Street. Ted Sherrock said this is an on-going project.

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: Nilles asked Mayor Cusat regarding the status of the sinkhole on Vine Street. Mayor Cusat said he does not know if the Bureau of Mine Reclamation received a decision if it was a "mine-related" or if it is the City's fault. He said the bureau measured it up for repairs, will bring the materials, and "dump it in there". Mayor Cusat said the bureau will dump the "fill" but will not repair the street. He stated Barry Isett is working on the project.

Comments from Junior Council: Colombo asked Mayor Cusat if there are any updates on the old St. Joseph Medical Center. He said no. Colombo asked about the old American Legion project. Mayor Cusat said it is still in the design process.

Colombo thanked the City department's for all their work in the changing winter weather. He said most sidewalks were shoveled. He reminded all to check on their neighbors.

Ondishin said when the weather breaks, if DPW could check on the traffic lights at Broad and Church Streets and Cedar and Broad, and Poplar and Broad Streets. He stated they are "out of time".

Perry asked Police Chief Schoonmaker about the City parking sticks. Schoonmaker said they are "very productive". He stated there are a total of 14 parking sticks, currently, in the City. He stated the City needs to put some concrete pads for the devices at some locations. Schoonmaker asked City Council to email him back and let him know of potential areas where the parking sticks could be placed.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:31 p.m.