

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 in Council Chambers and via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m.

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; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the September 26, 2023 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): Kevin Schadder, Heights-Terrace Elementary School's Principal, said on behalf of the Heights-Terrace PTA, he is here to speak on Resolution 2023-66- A Resolution Authorizing the City of Hazleton to apply for a Statewide Local Share Account Grant on behalf of the Heights-Terrace Elementary Middle School Parent-Teacher Association. Schadder said he is asking for the support of City Council to enter into the "pool" of statewide grants. He stated this would allow Heights-Terrace School to start the playground sooner.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

Ordinance 2023-6

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part II, Chapter 440, Streets and Sidewalks, Article I, Use, Construction and Maintenance, adding Section 440-30, Obstructing Public Sidewalks in Relation to the Charging of Electric Vehicles (**1ST READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo

On the Question:

Perry said this refers to residents putting cords across the City sidewalks. Atty. Logsdon said he

and City Council discussed this in the past. He said there are a lot more electric vehicles on the roads. He said this could involve a tripping or safety hazard. Barletta stated this is a “good start”.

Perry said this issue is, usually, not discussed. He said this could be incorporated into the City’s Zoning Ordinance. He said there is no designated spot, on the street, for electronic charging. He stated Washington, D.C. has cords with reflectors on them. He said this is for a larger metropolitan area, where the City is not there yet.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

(2ND AND 3RD READINGS)

None

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2023-62

A Resolution Requesting Local Share Account Funds for Hazleton City for Projects and Improvements at City View Park

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

On the Question:

Perry stated the resolution is requesting \$1,052,738 to be used for an ADA accessible 18-hole golf course, ice cream concession stand, and all associated site improvements. He said with the grand opening, Mayor Cusat had a projection laid out of the projects to be done here. Atty. Logsdon said this resolution is for the statewide LSA grants. Perry asked if there is a large pool of money at the state level. Atty. Logsdon said it is very competitive.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2023-63

A Resolution Requesting Statewide Local Share Account Funds for Hazleton City for the Remaining Street Paving in the Heights Neighborhood of the City

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

On the Question:

Barletta asked if this would be a springtime project. Atty. Logsdon said this project is slated for 2024.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2023-64

A Resolution Authorizing the City of Hazleton to apply for a Statewide Local Share Account Grant on behalf of the Hazleton City Land Bank for the demolition, removal, and restoration of the 625 W. 6th Street Property

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Colombo stated this is for the old dairy building. He asked if this will affect the gentleman with “the roof”. Atty. Logsdon said this demolition does not involve him.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2023-65 Approving Hazleton Public Transit's Title VI+ Program

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Ralph Sharp said this is done every three years to update the Hazleton Transit programs and Policies in order to maintain their federal funds they receive every year. He said it deals with every transit authority where everyone is equal regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2023-66 A Resolution Authorizing the City of Hazleton to apply for a Statewide Local Share Account Grant on behalf of the Heights-Terrace Elementary Middle School Parent-Teacher Association

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Perry.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

New Business: None.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: Ricky DeLucca, Hazleton, asked Ondishin how many employees he has at his business. Ondishin stated six. DeLucca asked what he used the payroll protection loans (PPP) for. Ondishin said it is used to keep his employees working. DeLucca stated he will go further and “after” Ondishin first. DeLucca said Mayor Cusat has sixteen employees at Cusat’s.

Robert Nemeth, 63 Center Hill Road, Sugarloaf, asked City Council members if they agree with amending the City’s Zoning Ordinance so the development of ST. Joseph’s Hospital could move forward. Perry said Nemeth would like the City to change the ordinance from three cars to one car. Ondishin said he would not change the ordinance for one entity but will not give his opinion on this. He said he thinks the City should get rid of the building. He stated “cramming” people in this building is not a good idea. Nemeth said the last developer was there for 45 days but received multiple code violations. He said there is someone, in the City, interested in this property.

Perry stated he was at meetings with engineers and state representatives regarding this building. He said there was money for a parking garage. He stated it is on the market for \$7,000,000. Atty. Logsdon said he could present his proposed amendments to the City and City administration could present them to the City’s Planning Commission and the engineers.

Perry said he has not heard anything, from the “other side”, in a while. Atty. Logsdon said if there is an appeal, this would be decided by the Zoning Hearing Board. He said there is a mechanism to amend the Zoning Ordinance, set by the Municipal Planning Code (MPC), and council would be able to consider this. Perry said they worked with a PA State Representative and Senator. Barletta asked Atty. Logsdon to find out where the City is at with this building. Atty. Logsdon said yes. Nemeth said the St. Joseph building consists of 170,000 square feet. Nemeth asked if City Council members are willing to sit down and talk about this issue. Perry said yes.

Nemeth stated on the subject of the City Code Enforcement, the City has a serious problem with Diane Panzarella. Nemeth said West Hazleton borough hired her, they got rid of her, and Hazleton hired her back. He said he noticed a door smashed open on a City building. Nemeth was going to tell her about this, but said Panzarella was coming towards his car, taking pictures, and stated, “You are not allowed to be on this street”. Nemeth said she “picks and chooses who she wants to cite”. He said it is in the City’s best interest to get rid of her.

Eugene Babula, Hazleton, asked about the City purchasing the Gottstein Building. Perry stated a down payment was made, in 2022, for \$17,500. He said the City has to “act” in one year. Perry said the purchase of the building will be made, completely, with American Rescue Plan money. He stated no taxpayer money will be used. Babula asked if Mayor Cusat is allowed to buy properties on behalf of the City. Perry stated Mayor Cusat has control of the federal money. He stated the form of the City’s government allows the executive to purchase properties. Atty. Logsdon stated, currently, the City’s fire departments are not involved in moving into the building. Lynch said the executive authority “lies” within one person, Mayor Cusat, and City Council is the legislative body.

Babula asked about the incident where he got his car window smashed. He asked for an update. Perry stated Babula needs to check with the police department. He said "Coffee with a Cop" program is, currently, going on at the Altmiller Playground.

Tina Lorenzo, Hazleton, asked when the Code Enforcement Department issues a ticket if it goes directly to the homeowner or to the courts first. Atty. Logsdon said if the resident is cited, the Code Department would send the ticket to the magistrate's office. Then the magistrate's office sends out the notice and hearing date. Lorenzo said she is talking about high weeds on a property. Atty. Logsdon stated, he believes, the citation gets filed with the magistrate's court sends it out, certified mail, to the cited resident. Mundie asked if the resident would receive a citation first. Atty. Logsdon said there are two different processes: if it is a quality-of-life violation, a citation process is used and if it is a property maintenance violation, a notice of violation process is used. Lorenzo stated the Code Department had pictures of the violation, and the high grass pictures showed it was not her property, but her neighbors. She said if she did not ask for the pictures, she would be paying for a ticket for someone else's yard. Atty. Logsdon said this case was withdrawn and the Code Department is aware of this incident.

Bernardo Rodriquez, 17th & Alter Streets, asked why the City gives a parking ticket three times regarding street sweeping. He said he got a ticket. Rodriquez stated the street sweeping sign says they sweep on Monday, Tuesday, and Fridays. Perry asked Atty. Logsdon if he could challenge these tickets. Atty. Logsdon said Rodriquez has an appellate mechanism he could go through. Rodriquez said three times a week is a lot to sweep the street.

Vianney Castro, 126 Tamarack Street, Hazleton, said there are many grants obtained for City View Park. Castro stated there are many more parks, in the City, with many kids using them, and are in bad shape. He said more attention needs to be given to them.

Perry stated 12th Ward and Pine Street playgrounds have been redone. Ondishin said there are several City playgrounds that have not been worked on.

Comments from Mayor: None- absent.

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: Perry asked Lynch to work out a schedule for the City Department Managers to have a WORK SESSION. Lynch said a few managers asked if they could meet during the day. Perry stated the next City Council meeting is October 24th. Lynch stated the City budget is presented at the last City Council meeting in November. Perry stated the City Department Managers could promote their departments and explain what they each do for the City. Colombo said they need to make an effort to come to the City Council meetings.

Colombo said he received a complaint regarding damage done to a City residents' property, Mr. Evancho, on 19th Street. He said the garbage hauler is picking up and throwing the cans against his building. He said the City residents are paying more for their garbage. Atty. Logsdon said he has photographs and will present this issue to the HCA, who handles Tamaqua Transfer contract.

Perry said City Council would like to get an interpreter for their meetings. Atty. Logsdon stated he is looking into a few options. He said the City needs to look into the cost of a real-time translator. He said he will check with Judge Zola's office regarding the translator.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.