

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2024**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, October 8, 2024, in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:11p.m.

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

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

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of September 24, 2024, Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): Dee Deakos, 43 Mine Street, Hazleton said there are a lot of “paper street” ordinances on the agenda. She asked who owns this portion of the streets once the ordinance is passed. Atty. Logsdon said, “it depends”. He stated “paper” streets were streets that were “plotted-out”, in the City, but never developed. Atty. Logsdon said this is why they are called “paper” streets because they only exist “on paper”. He said the private rights, to this street, were not terminated, and are still easement rights. Deakos asked if a resident, who lived in the center of the block, could build a garage and use this easement. Atty. Logsdon said yes, there is nothing City Council could do that would disrupt anyone’s easement rights to go to this garage.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

Ordinance 2024-19

An Ordinance Authorizing the Vacation of a Portion of an Unnamed “Paper Street” located to the north and to the rear of the Properties on Lahm Avenue and off of Mill Street in the City of Hazleton **(1ST READING)**

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon reviewed this area on the City map via Luzerne County Public GIS portal. Bruno asked if this part of the street was vacated, who is taking care of this road. Atty. Logsdon said it is “definitely” not the City. Perry said a resident stated the City has not maintained or plowed this section of the street for over 40 years. Atty. Logsdon said they want to do more work on this ordinance. He asked City Council to pass this ordinance, on first reading, and then “take it from there”.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES 4-0 ON 1ST READING

Ordinance 2024-20

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part I, Chapter 66, Land Bank, Section 66-3, Board of Directors (**1st READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon stated when the City passed the Land Bank Ordinance, one of the provisions calls for no public official to sit on the Land Bank board. He said this is not defined in the ordinance or enabling act.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES 4-0 ON 1ST READING

(2ND AND 3RD READINGS)

Ordinance 2024-17

An Ordinance Authorizing the Vacation of a Portion of an Unnamed “Paper Street” Between Branch Court and Lincoln Street in the City of Hazleton (**2nd READING**) -

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Perry.

On the Question:

Perry stated City Council needs more clarification on this ordinance. Atty. Logsdon said the City needs to look if the legal descriptions being provided are correct. He said the City will make sure there are no underlying easement rights. He stated City Council could request a title search on the street.

MOTION TO TABLE:

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Perry.

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

ORDINANCE TABLED 4-0

Ordinance 2024-18 An Ordinance Authorizing the Vacation of a Portion of an Unnamed "Paper Street" Identified as an Extension of N. Pine Street and located North of E. Holly Street in the City of Hazleton (**2nd READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Ondishin said he is not comfortable with this ordinance "just yet".

MOTION TO TABLE:

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Perry.

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

ORDINANCE TABLED 4-0

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2024-47 Appointments to Junior Council

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Perry stated the Junior Council program has been in place for many years. This program was instituted by Perry.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES 4-0

Resolution 2024-48

A Resolution Authorizing the City of Hazleton Police Department to apply for the 2024 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Ondishin.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES 4-0

Resolution 2024 – 49

A Resolution Awarding the Bid for the James, Peace and 21st Streets Stormwater Improvements Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES 4-0

New Business: None.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: J.T. Klein, 226 East 1st Street, Hazleton, said he is a member of the Hazleton City Firefighters, Local 507. He stated he is here to discuss two problems Local 507 is having with local members and with Mayor Cusat. Klein said John Leshko, a member of the City fire department, for over 20 years, has not received a pension check from the City. Klein said Mayor Cusat will not “sign-off” for him to receive his pension checks. He said Leshko has not received nine pension checks.

Klein said the second problem is a member of local 507, a veteran, who would like to “buy back” some military time to retire. He said Mayor Cusat does not want to work with Local 507. Klein said he does not know how Mayor Cusat could turn his back on a veteran who served our country. He said, in the past, Local 507 has worked with the City, the mayor’s office and City Council to move the City forward. He said Mayor Cusat negotiated their current contract. Klein said Local 507 has had positive “feedback” from City Council, members of the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL), and legal counsel.

Colombo asked Atty. Logsdon how far this issue “has gone”. Atty. Logsdon said due to a personnel issue, he cannot discuss this situation. He said the City’s labor counsel handles this issue. He said he will get the status to City Council members.

Comments from Mayor: None-absent

Comments from City Administrator: None- absent

Comments from Council: Colombo said the City of Hazleton is putting together a hurricane relief effort “Hazleton Helps”. He said this relief would be for the two hurricanes that had hit, Helene and Milton. He said the City, currently, has three trailers. The City is looking for bottled water, batteries, pet food, flashlights, and infant and adult diapers. Colombo stated bottled water is on “top of the list”. He said “Hazleton has heart”.

Bruno asked if City Council has anything to do with the City firefighters union contracts. Perry said no. Atty. Logsdon said City Council approves the final contract, but the grievous process goes through Mayor Cusat. Bruno said people stop him all the time to let him know their concerns and issues.

Perry said he hopes the firefighters and City administration come to a resolution.

Perry asked people to pray for Hurricane Helene and Milton victims.

Perry thanked the Local 507 firefighters’ union for coming to the meeting.

Colombo thanked all the new Hazleton Junior Council Members for attending.

Perry thanked the Hazleton Housing Authority for making a donation of \$60,000 to the City.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.