

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024**

**Call to Order:** Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:12 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; Nilles-present; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:** The minutes of the March 26, 2024 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications:** None

**Bid Opening:** None

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** Betsy Durso, 536 South Poplar Street, Hazleton, asked if the angled parking that would be done, on Poplar Street, is the existing side that the cars park on. Mayor Cusat said this is on the west side. He said the state will be painting the lanes. Bruno stated parking needs to be at a 45-degree angle. Durso asked if the City would be enforcing the parking. Police Chief Schoonmaker said it would be the same if a resident did not park in a metered space. Mayor Cusat said there is no City ordinance, currently, that allows for any perpendicular parking. Durso asked when this would start to take effect. Mayor Cusat said after the street sweeping is done.

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**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

**ORDINANCES:**

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

None

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

**Ordinance 2024-10**

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part II, Chapter 325, Parking, adding Article VII, Special Variations of On-Street Parking (2<sup>nd</sup> **READING**)

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Perry stated working with the state, this should make it easier for people to drive up through there.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**RESOLUTIONS:**

**Resolution 2024-18**

Honoring Smilax Floral Shop on its 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2024-19**

Honoring Sulette Lange- PA State Poetry Out Loud High School Contest Winner

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

**On the Question:**

Perry said the City is very proud of Sulette in representing our area.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2024-20**

A Resolution Awarding the David Avenue Reconstruction, Stormwater Improvements and Sanitary Relocation Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

**On the Question:**

Perry stated the City will be using American Rescue Plan (ARP) money. He said this resolution allows the City to open up David Avenue. Perry asked if this includes curbing. Mayor Cusat said it includes road paving but not sidewalks.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2024-21**

A Resolution Awarding the South Side Fire Station Roof Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Ondishin asked if this is the fire station by KFC. Fire Chief Leshko said this is the fire station on East Broad Street. Nilles asked if they will enlarge the gutters for the water flow. Leshko said the gutters will be fixed. He said these are the original gutters from when the fire station was built in 1963.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**New Business:** Mayor Cusat stated City officials are working with City engineers regarding a massive paving project in the City. He said the financial "guys" could come to a City Council meeting to discuss the City's financial options to pay for the project.

Mayor Cusat said the City paving project would be from 1<sup>st</sup> Street through 22<sup>nd</sup> Streets. He stated this would be a total of 17 miles of road at a cost of \$7,800,000. Mayor Cusat said there are a total of 114 miles of roads in the City. He stated the City has paved 42 miles so far. He said all the paving would be done in one year with the start date of May, 2025, and the first loan payment in 2026. Mayor Cusat said he will start accepting road bids in the summer of 2024. He stated the payment of the loan would be between \$800,000- \$900,000. Mayor Cusat said this project would include millings of the roads. He stated the City could use General Fund and Community Development money.

Bruno asked if any utility companies are, currently, working on the City streets. Mayor Cusat said the Hazleton Sewer Authority is working on 15<sup>th</sup> Street and “below”.

Perry asked what the interest rate would be on the loan. Mayor Cusat said for a loan, the interest rate would be around 6-7%. For a bond, the interest rate is in the 3% “range”. Mayor Cusat said Ryan Hottenstein, Financial Solutions Vice-President, could come to a City Council meeting to discuss the City’s options.

Bruno asked Mayor Cusat regarding the City streets stone gutters. Mayor Cusat stated the City started “pulling them out” but had to stop, after one street, due to the high cost of the project.

Nilles reminded Mayor Cusat regarding the companies that are getting tax breaks for ten years, and what they will be paying, in their taxes, after this period.

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**Old Business:** None.

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**Comments from the Audience:** Walter Meshofski, 927 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of the old 12<sup>th</sup> Ward Playground (Roosevelt Park). He said there are no parking signs in this area. He stated 16<sup>th</sup> Street & Branch Court is not supposed to have parking. He said the people do not know this. Meshofski said it is dangerous in this area. He said there is parking allowed on McKinley & 17<sup>th</sup> Streets. Mayor Cusat said he will let Frank Vito, Director of DPW, know about this situation. Police Chief Schoonmaker stated once no parking is posted, then the police officers could enforce this. Ondishin told Meshofski he could always send an email to any City Council members, and they could send it to City officials.

Betty Durso, 536 South Poplar Street, Hazleton, said there are swings and a fence, broken, at West Court Playground. Mayor Cusat said the swings should have been taken down in 2023. Durso asked if the mulch will be replaced. Mayor Cusat stated the wooden mulch should be replaced. Durso said there are constant softball games at the playground, and the kids are standing on the dugouts, and jumping on the fences. She said there was a football league playing there, ripping up the grass. Perry said the kids should not be destroying the playground. Mayor Cusat there is no “actual” league scheduled to play there.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat stated that a presentation will be given, at the next City Council meeting, from a representative from Municipal Parking Services. The discussion will be on the City possibly purchasing Safety Sticks to reduce illegal parking.

Mayor Cusat said the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new Hazleton City Police Department will be held when the police are all “situated” in their new home.

Mayor Cusat stated the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new Hazleton Public Transit Bus Storage and Maintenance Facility will be held on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Cusat said the Hazleton Land Bank has closed on the old Ferdinand Restaurant. The Land Bank will, also, be knocking down a property on East Green Street and the old Legion Building.

Mayor Cusat stated the owners of the old St. Joseph Medical Building requested a zoning application. He said the original zoning application was denied for apartments. The new owners proposal is for commercial, assisted living and a day care center.

Mayor Cusat stated the City street sweeping is almost completed. He said DPW will do patching of the streets and overlay.

Mayor Cusat said the Hazleton Parking Garage has been re-opened on April 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Comments from City Administrator:** None

**Comments from Council:** Perry asked Mayor Cusat regarding the “buckling” of the road in the area of 20<sup>th</sup> & Hayes Streets. Mayor Cusat stated there are no tunnels, below the street, but is filled with debris. Mayor Cusat suggested the City abate, or “rip up” the street, at a cost between \$70,000-\$80,000. He said to construct the road, the cost would be \$140,000. He said this money would come out of the General Fund account.

Colombo asked Mayor Cusat when the Hometown Heroes banners will be put up again along the downtown streets. Mayor Cusat said he does not know when they will go back up.

Bruno stated several City residents are complaining about the ongoing garbage problem and “blowing around” the streets. He said the residents are paying for the service to have the garbage, that lays in the streets, to be picked up, but this is not getting done. Mayor Cusat stated the City wanted to hire people to pick up the garbage. He said the City and the HCA never came to an agreement on this matter. Mayor Cusat stated the HCA has kept this money. Nilles stated the HCA has bought a machine to pick up the garbage. Mayor Cusat said this machine does not pick up the garbage. He said the City is, currently, negotiating with the HCA.

Perry stated he is glad to see Colombo and Mayor Cusat back to work after their illnesses.

Perry thanked Frank Vito, Director of DPW, for all his employees work on Buttonwood Street.

Perry stated there will be a Hazleton City Council Special Meeting, and public hearing, on May 13, 2024, to take testimony, evidence and make a decision on the appeal of Pathways to Everyday Life Human Services, Inc., located at 563-565 North Laurel Street, Hazleton, PA., from revocation of their business license.

**Comments from Junior Council:** None

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

