

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2023**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, July 11, 2023 in Council Chambers and via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:13 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 June 13, 2023 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, spoke of Ordinance 2023-4. She said she is not objecting to a stop sign. Deakos said an out-of-town resident does not know they would have to stop, at every intersection, at a court or alley. She said there should be a stop sign at every intersection.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

Ordinance 2023-4

An Ordinance Authorizing the Erection of a Stop Sign at the Intersection of West 14th Street and North Manhattan Court (**1st Reading**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon stated this is a new item on the agenda. He said this is a court and is not sure if there are any stop signs at any courts in the City. Police Chief Schoonmaker said there are no other stop signs at any courts. Atty. Logsdon stated, then, this ordinance may need to be tabled and may need

a traffic study to be done. Barletta asked Schoonmaker if this ordinance should be tabled. Schoonmaker (*inaudible*). Atty. Logsdon said City Council needs to do a resolution confirming a traffic study in this area.

MOTION TO TABLE-

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Barletta.

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

ORDINANCE TABLED

Ordinance 2023-5

An Ordinance Authorizing the Erection of a Stop Sign at the Intersection of East Buttonwood Street and South Wyoming Street Court **(1st Reading)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Barletta asked if this ordinance should, also, be tabled. Police Chief said no, there was already a traffic study done. Ondishin said, currently, it is a three-way stop. Schoonmaker said the City will make it a four-way stop.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

(2ND READING)

Ordinance 2023-3

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part II, Chapter 312, Noise, Article II, Noise Disturbances, Section 312-14, Violations and Penalties **(2nd Reading)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Barletta said, with the first reading, the violations were increased. She asked Schoonmaker how the Fourth of July weekend went. Schoonmaker said there were a total of 118 complaints in the City with 30 police officers working from 2:45 p.m. until 4 a.m., and issued 40 citations for noise and disorderly conduct.

Schoonmaker said council should amend the ordinance from any word that is shall and change to may. Schoonmaker (*inaudible*).

MOTION TO AMEND-

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

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

MOTION TO AMEND PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Roll Call (AS AMENDED): Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes.

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY AS AMENDED

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2023-31

Resolution Approving the Settlement Agreement and Release dated January 27, 2023 with the Hazleton City Authority

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Perry stated this is based on the settlement agreement. Atty. Logsdon said yes. He stated this was settled back in January, 2023, but the City wanted to make a resolution with City Council approving this. He said the City could “close” on this. Perry said this relates to the new road out to Humboldt Industrial Park. He said it is a very windy road but is a large “swath” of land. Barletta said she is glad the City could come up with a large settlement.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2023-32

A Resolution Awarding the Bids for the CAN DO Community Park Phase 3 Multi-Prime (General and Electric) Contracts

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Perry.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said he received the bid tabs from the City engineers office. He said these two companies seem to be the lowest bidders for these two aspects of Phase 3. Perry said this is in the front of the Hazleton Art League, in the empty lot. Perry asked when will the project start. Mayor Cusat (*inaudible*).

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2023-33

Resolution Authorizing the Traffic Study at the Intersection of West 14th Street and North Manhattan Court

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: Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, said her garbage was, recently, stolen. She said this is a potential for identify theft. She said she did not call 911 but informed the Hazleton Police Department.

Cindee DeLucca, Hazleton, said she placed a packet on every City Council's desk regarding the City's towing contract. She said this concerns the City residents and surrounding areas. DeLucca said the contract was pre-determined when looking at the dates on the contract. She said the contract was signed in June but prepared in April. She said Paul's Towing fees do not "jive" with the fee schedule and signed by Mayor Cusat, Atty. Sean Logsdon and Sateach. DeLucca asked Mayor Cusat if he agrees with the fees that Paul's Towing will be charging. Mayor Cusat said he agrees with the fee schedule that Paul's Towing gave him, and that is what they signed. Atty. Logsdon said this is what Paul's Towing agreed to charge, that is what is signed, and that is what Paul agreed to do. DeLucca asked Colombo if this was going to be reviewed because it is in excess of what should be charged. DeLucca said the same tower is charging less fees, in the borough of West Hazleton, and charging more fees in the City of Hazleton. Atty. Logsdon said he thinks that West Hazleton sets their own fees. DeLucca stated she will give them a copy of the Towing and Storing Facilities Standards Act. She said the charges are ridiculous, and hopes they get charged them. De Lucca said PA State Police will be coming into City Hall due to the police office department refusing to give residents an auto release form to get their car back. DeLucca said if the resident does not plead, before a magistrate, they are withholding their vehicles. She said it is unlawful to hold a resident's car for 10 days. She said the PA State Police said it is against the law. She said Mayor Cusat set the price, and wants to monopolize off the towing companies, as he stated in the paper. She asked why the City is charging the residents the higher fees and not the lowest fees.

Barletta asked if the City is charging a 2-hour minimum for an accident. Atty. Logsdon said Paul from Paul's Towing could come to a City Council meeting to explain the fees. She said she is "sick" of always hearing about the towing fees in the City. Mayor Cusat said his signature means he accepted the fees and the contract. Barletta said Paul needs to come to the next meeting and explain all the fees.

DeLucca asked Atty. Logsdon if he checked into the backgrounds for the towing companies. He said no. DeLucca said she gave Atty. Logsdon proof.

Robert Nemeth, Sr., 63 Center Hill Road, Sugarloaf, said the old St. Joseph Hospital building has been an issue for 10-12 years. He is not sure why there was a recent 5-0 Hazleton Zoning Hearing Board vote on denying a zoning permit. Nemeth suggested City Council changing some of the Hazleton Zoning perimeters. He said there have been four developers who had interest in this property. Nemeth said, then, "here comes code with \$100, \$500, and \$1,000 fees". He said the developer "put up with this" for several months, but felt the City was not helping them with their development. Nemeth asked if the City is going to chase someone else, out of town, who wants to develop this building. Nemeth said they need to "re-group" and do something to help people. He said they need ideas, instead of all the negative.

Nemeth said the City has a wonderful police department, and the officers respect Chief Schoonmaker. He said there needs to be something done with traffic violations in the City. Nemeth stated his son was hit, a few months ago, by a Latino taxi, and has been in the hospital ever since.

Bob Yevak, 1011 N. Locust Street, Hazleton, said he became good friends with a developer from the St. Joseph Hospital building. He said the City "missed the boat", with Ofra, and there is something "dirty" with that vote of 5-0.

Ann Organist, 15 West 14th Street, Hazleton, thanked City Council for all their work in trying to improve the Altmiller Playground issues. She asked if the speed bumps were ordered. Barletta said the speed bumps were ordered two months ago. Schoonmaker said he has no confirmation date. Ondishin said the City wants to get the stop sign in this area to slow the traffic down.

Comments from Mayor: Mayor Cusat said the City has started milling road work, in the Northwest section of the City, on Roosevelt, McKinley, Lincoln and part of James and part of Peace Streets.

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: Perry asked if he was in accident, would he have to take Paul's Towing. Schoonmaker said (*inaudible*). Ondishin said if he gets in an accident, and does not want Paul's Towing, that is the residents right to choose another tower. Barletta said this is a state law, and the resident has the right to request another tower. Barletta stated, also, the police officers could request a different towing company. Barletta said the City could put the fees on the City website for the residents. Colombo said the City had interviews with two towers to decide their contract. Barletta asked if Atty. Logsdon could send all City Council members a copy of the City towing contract. Barletta said she is "all" for the towing companies getting paid, and with everything expensive.

Perry stated the City will be having an upcoming Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting on July 20th to review the results of the survey. Lynch said the Steering Committee received double of the surveys they projected and were very happy.

Colombo thanked Fire Chief Leshko for obtaining a grant to purchase air packs. He said Leshko stated they will be selling their old air packs.

Colombo said the Hazleton Police Department made two saturation patrols over the Fourth of July weekend, involving over 80 police officers. He thanked them for all their work.

Colombo said Junior Council Member Paul Neyhart will be here at our next meeting.

Colombo thanked Mayor Cusat and the Recreation Department for the Fourth of July fireworks and all their work. Colombo said he received three complaints of City resident's house damage from fireworks. He stated to leave the fireworks to the professionals.

Ondishin said there was a great Fourth of July fireworks display at City View Park this year.

Perry thanked Lauren Sacco for being the "go between" in completing the Hometown Heroes banners on Broad Street.

Perry said City View Park playground is amazing.

Perry asked Atty. Logsdon how the City debt and fund balance policies are coming. Atty. Logsdon said they are still working on this.

Perry asked Police Chief Schoonmaker about the gun detection camera system if it is "up and running". Chief Schoonmaker (*inaudible*). Perry spoke of the new police officer hires. Schoonmaker (*inaudible*). Perry asked if the police are doing more foot saturations around the playground. Schoonmaker (*inaudible*).

Barletta stated City Council had a request, from a police officer, to trim some trees around the Altmiller playground. Schoonmaker (*inaudible*).

Perry said nothing has come to the City regarding the proposed transfer station. Mayor Cusat said, currently, no application has been filed with the City.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.