

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2026**

**Call to Order:** Council met at a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, August 11, 2026, in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:04 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 July 28, 2026, 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, spoke of Ordinance 2026-13. She had stated she had an incident with an electric bicycle. The e-bike did not stop and was going in the wrong direction. Deakos said these vehicles are a danger.***

***Deakos, also, spoke of Resolution 2026-46. She asked under what law, the Hazleton City Authority, was able to "hand over the money" to the City. Perry said they will try to address this issue when they get to it.***

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**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

**ORDINANCES:**

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

**. Ordinance 2026-15**

**An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, establishing a Municipal Homestead Property Tax Exemption for Qualified Owner-Occupied Residential Properties Pursuant to the Homestead Property Exclusion Act, Providing Eligibility Requirements, Establishing the Amount of the Exemption, Providing Administration of the Program, and Establishing an Effective Date (1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Perry stated the City is giving all owner-occupied residents a tax exemption starting in 2027. The

Luzerne County Assessment Office will designate this. Ondishin stated the tax exemption is coming from the City of Hazleton. Mayor Cusat said this ordinance allows the City to give the tax exemption. The maximum allowed will be \$426.00 and based off the total assessed value of a property. At the end of this year, City Council could decide what the number will be. Atty. Favreau stated the first condition will be that the Luzerne County Assessment office will grant the exemption. The property needs to be owner-occupied, in the name of the individual, and the individual has to live at the property. Mayor Cusat said this is an incentive for people to live, and stay, in the City. He mentioned this is why the City, also offers a LERTA. Perry said the City has never offered a Homestead Property tax exemption.

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

### **ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1<sup>st</sup> READING**

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#### **Ordinance 2026-16**

#### **An Ordinance Authorizing the Erection of a Stop Sign at the Intersection of North Laurel and 14<sup>th</sup> Street (1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Nilles.

#### **On the Question:**

Perry stated this would be in the area of the cemetery. He said the City is trying to slow people down going on 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Mayor Cusat said he hopes this slows people down before getting to the hill. Nilles said there are signs above that warn people to slow down.

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

### **ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1<sup>st</sup> READING**

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#### **(2<sup>ND</sup> READINGS)**

**Ordinance 2026-13**

An Ordinance of the City of Hazleton Regulating the Operation of Electric Bicycles, Electric Scooters, and other Micromobility Devices Upon City Streets, Sidewalks, Parks, Trails, and Other Public Property; Providing for Safe Operation; Authorizing Restrictions on Certain City Property; Establishing Parking Requirements; Providing for Enforcement and Prescribing Penalties (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

**On the Question:**

Nilles stated this ordinance needs to be “held” on the table due to the City Recreational Board decision on electric vehicles and “some other language” that needs to be inserted.

**NO MOTION TO REMOVE FROM TABLE- ORDINANCE FAILS**

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**RESOLUTIONS:**

**Resolution 2026-46**

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Hazleton Approving and Authorizing the Execution of a Settlement Agreement and Limited Release Between the City of Hazleton and the Hazleton City Authority

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

**On the Question:**

Perry stated the agreement is for \$3,400,000 with monthly payments of \$283,333 to the City. This money will be allocated for certain projects in the City. There was a Master Service Agreement, with the HCA for 15 years. The Hazleton City Authority “covers” the City of Hazleton. He mentioned

the City has been working on this agreement for about 3 ½ years.

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

## **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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### **Resolution 2026-47**

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Hazleton  
Establishing the Intended Allocation and Use of Annual Funds  
Received from the Hazleton City Authority

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

### **On the Question:**

Perry stated this establishes a “framework” of how the City could spend the money. For the Homestead Exemption, there will be \$1,700,000 dedicated for this funding. The funding items are- A total of \$1,000,000 for City Street Paving projects, \$300,000 to establish a City Capital Budget, a total of \$200,000 for a Tax Anticipation Note, and \$200,000 for Redevelopment projects. He said this money will benefit the City's residents.

Mayor Cusat said the City will receive \$1,700,000 in 2026. Due to the year being over half over, the Homestead Exemption will start in 2027. The money will be allocated for the other four projects.

Ondishin asked Mayor Cusat what a Capital Budget is. Mayor Cusat stated the City has \$0 in the City's capital budget account. He said this money would be a surplus account. He mentioned the City will utilize this money for fire trucks, dump trucks and larger equipment. He said the City would need to purchase a fire truck every two years. Ondishin stated the price of fire trucks have increased.

Perry said the City's water rates will go up, but the City residents' taxes will go down. Mayor Cusat

said the City's residents' water bill is small compared to other municipalities.

Nilles said the City's garbage bills are more than the water bills. He said City Council and City Administration is trying to help everyone who lives in the City. Nilles said this increase, also, helps the City infrastructure with up-to-date equipment.

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

### **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2026-48**

A Resolution of the City of Hazleton Honorarily Designating the Portion of South Fulton Court between East Beech Street and East Noble Street as "ICE MAN LANE" in Honor and Memory of Nicholas J. Caputo

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Colombo.

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

### **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2026-49**

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, Awarding the Contract for the Diamond Fire Station No. 2 First Floor Wall Repair Project

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Perry stated this bid was already opened and awarded to D&M Construction Unlimited, Inc. in the amount of \$36,000.

Fire Chief Don Leshko said this will repair walls and include some building repairs throughout all fire stations. He said this grant will not use a lot of money. Leshko said the City received another LSA grant for \$100,000 for repairing interior walls.

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

### **RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**New Business:** None

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**Old Business:** None

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**Comments from the Audience:** Lisa Racosky, 175 Birch Knoll Drive, Hazleton, spoke of the City taxes. She said she pays more this year in City taxes than she pays Luzerne County. She said she has no quality of life. Racosky mentioned she does not know what the taxes pay for. She said the Birch Knoll fire hydrants do not work. She said there is a lot of garbage in her area. Racosky said no one wants to come to the City; they all want to move out. She stated it is not the town “the older people have built”. She mentioned the City’s downtown looks terrible. She mentioned there are no trees, in Birch Knoll Estates, due to the new warehouse construction.

Racosky asked if all new City warehouses get a 10-year tax break. Mayor Cusat said every property has a different arrangement. He stated the agreements were “property to property”. He said Samsung has a 10-year scale, North Point has a 10-year scale, and Hazleton Creek is for 10-years. Racosky asked what these new warehouses would do. Mayor Cusat said the new warehouses that are already built have tenants. Lynch said if the warehouses or buildings, are vacant, they still need to pay real estate taxes.

Racosky asked about the new road off of Buttonwood Street. Mayor Cusat said this road is a private driveway. The City did not build it and no one should be driving on it. The road leads into Harwood. Leshko said the road was designed for safety. Perry stated this is a roadway for trucks to go onto the interstate and bypass the City. Mayor Cusat said, maybe, in the future, the City will take ownership of the road.

Dan Lynch stated the City has ACT 50, and the school assesses a higher EIT tax. The real estate taxes, in the City, have not been very high. He offered Racosky to come and talk to him to discuss any City issue.

Dee Deakos, 43 Mine Street, Hazleton, asked about the legal issue of the HCA giving this money to the City. Perry stated the HCA may need to answer this question. Mayor Cusat said the HCA officials came and made the City this offer. She said there may be a “conflict of interest” with Joe Zeller, City Community & Development Director, being president of the HCA board. Deakos said several residents are suing the HCA because their water rates have increased. Atty. Favreau stated there has been an “ongoing” dispute between the HCA and the City. He said the City does not need to speak of legal strategy with the HCA at a public meeting. He said if someone would sue the HCA, that is the HCA's problem. Mayor Cusat said there is a clause in the agreement that if the HCA would get sued, the City would not have to pay the money back.

Deakos spoke of the recent Eminent Domain on Laurel Street. She said the City has “taken” this property from an elderly lady who has lived there. She said the City was going to take the Blue Comet property. Deakos said the City let the YMCA take the Blue Comet property. Deakos said speaking of City redevelopment, a new soccer field is not necessary in the downtown area. She said there is a lot of empty downtown parking. She said instead of “taking” this property, the City could have fixed up the parking garage.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat said Council Chambers renovations are moving along. He said it is taking a little longer than he hoped.

Mayor Cusat said there was a Senate and House Republican Committee hearing, held on August 11, 2026, in Council Chambers.

Mayor Cusat stated the City's paving project, Phase 1, 1<sup>st</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Streets. should be completed by next week. He mentioned the paving company will be returning, in September, to start Phase 2. He said Phase 2 has “come in” under budget by about \$2,000,000. The north side of the City streets will be done- Vine, Alter, Locust, James, Grant and Peace Streets. He stated there will be Phases 3, 4 & 5 in the street paving project. Perry stated the City has never done so much street paving. Mayor Cusat said the HCA money will help with the paving project. He said a lot of the street inlets have to be prepared.

Mayor Cusat said the City events are completed for the summer. The next event, at City View Park, will be the Rotary Wine and Beer Festival on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Cusat reminded all of the 9/11 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary mass at St. Gabriel's Church.

**Comments from City Administrator:** None

**Comments from Council:** Colombo asked Don Leshko regarding the fire hydrants at Birch Knoll Estates. Leshko stated he does not know “what they ran up there”. He does not know if this will change. He said there is a new pump station on Buttonwood Street. Leshko said this is up to the HCA. He mentioned, usually, the HCA will call him when they test any fire hydrants.

Ondishin congratulated all involved in the HCA agreement negotiations. He said the money will benefit the City.

Perry, also, thanked all involved with the HCA agreement.

Perry mentioned there was a nice PA State Senators and Attorney General meeting, yesterday in Council Chambers, regarding crime.

Perry thanked all for coming to the meeting.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.