

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, August 13, 2024 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order.

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- (*via telephone*); Ondishin-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the July 9, 2024 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): None

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

Ordinance 2024-14

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part II, Chapter 350, Property Maintenance, Article II, Quality of Life (**1ST READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said this is an amendment to the City's Quality of Life Ordinance. This increases the fines, under the discretion of the district magistrate, to place on someone in violation of this ordinance, on commercial property. He stated these will be considered larger properties that need to be maintained.

Atty. Logsdon stated the current City fine is \$25.00- \$1,000 at the discretion of the district magistrate, but would be increased to \$50.00- \$2,000 for violation.

Bruno asked if this would include residential rental properties. Atty. Logsdon stated no, this is still

considered a residential property. He said it refers to cafés, offices, businesses and warehouses.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1ST READING

(2ND AND 3RD READINGS)

Ordinance 2024-13

An Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Hazleton, Part II, Chapter 350, Property Maintenance, Article I, Adoption of Standards **(2nd READING)**

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Ondishin.

MOTION TO REMOVE FROM TABLE:

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Ondishin.

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

MOTION TO REMOVE FROM TABLE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said there were a couple of small changes made to the ordinance, referencing the International Property Maintenance Code. He said he checked with Diane Panzarella in the Code Office on these amendments. Atty. Logsdon said Panzarella was in contact with the people at Tracer for the computer updates. He said it was determined that the 2018 IPMC version was better to use in the City.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2024-32 Resolution Approving Application for a Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant from the Commonwealth Financing Authority for Phase IV of the Alter Street Improvements Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Nilles asked what the money is being used for in Phase IV. Atty. Logsdon said he believes it is for the Alter Street sidewalks. Perry said it is based on the money the City is given. Nilles asked if there is anything “written down” to explain where the money is going. Ondishin stated there is no “scope of work” written down for council. Nilles asked Atty. Logsdon if he could get the “scope of work” for City Council. He stated the City residents need to know where the money is going. Lynch stated most of these applications are public documents available through the City Community Development Department.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2024-33 Approving Application for a Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant from the Commonwealth Financing Authority for Phase II of the Wyoming Street Improvements Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Ondishin stated the City is getting \$2,000,000 for Wyoming Street. Atty. Logsdon said there is also a PENN DOT multimodal fund grant the City applies for. He said everything is online.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2024-34 Appointing Right-To-Know Officer- Eileen Matenkoski

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Ondishin said he has no trouble with this resolution; “we need her”. Perry stated Matenkoski is currently working with the current Right-to-Know officer Chris Pavlick. Perry said it is a process and will “handle this eventually”.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2024-35 Appointment to the Housing Authority- Vincent Fayock

Presented by Nilles. Seconded by Bruno.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2024-36

A Resolution Awarding the Bid for the Hazleton City Conahan and Powell Drive Reconstruction Project

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said the recommended company to award the bid to is Robert C. Young, Inc. with a base bid of \$194,791. Ondishin asked if they were repaving the road. Atty. Logsdon said yes. Ondishin said good, the road is very bad “up there”.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

New Business: None.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, Hazleton, said the DPW Department caused some damage to her property. She said she has some pictures. She said in the wintertime, the plow comes through and digs out the asphalt and is right by her door. Deakos stated, on May 20, 2024, she emailed a picture to Mayor Cusat, and he stated, “he would take care of this”. She said, on July 10, 2024, she did a “follow-up” text, to Mayor Cusat, and is still not repaired.

Ondishin said he will bring this to Frank Vito, DPW Director’s, attention. Perry said the DPW has many projects to do, and the department is shorthanded.

Deakos said, recently, there was a robbery in her neighborhood. She said there was a neighbor who videotaped the robbery when it was occurring. She said the neighbor found their items at a pawn shop. Deakos said this should be followed-up on. Bruno said if the victim does not want this reported, there is nothing the City could do.

Bruno said there is a person riding around on a bicycle with a backpack and trying to steal another City resident's motorcycle.

John Longo, 172 Kiefer Ave., Hazleton said he sent an email to Mayor Cusat about the City selling West Court ball field/playground. Mayor Cusat did respond to Longo, stating he needs to "look into it". Perry stated he spoke to Mayor Cusat today, who stated, "the City is still working on it, does not know what the valuation is, and this would be a process". Atty. Logsdon agreed. He said the City would need to research the deed to see if there are any restrictions, and if the City would have grant money. He said the City will "move forward", and this will take some time.

Longo asked if the playground could be "repurposed". He said the rules at the park are not being abided by. Longo said there is room up at the City Dog Park for people to play baseball/softball there. Lynch said, last month, the neighbors were talking about closing the park. He said closing the park is not so simple to do. Lynch stated "repurposing" the park could be done. Ondishin stated this park is in a nice area of the City. He suggested playing pickleball, at this playground, instead of baseball. Lynch said there is a solution for everyone, and the City is trying to work it out.

Longo stated the park is "land-locked" and is always a problem with parking. Perry said the Hazleton Police Department will do their job at this park. He said the City has more people, with parking being difficult. Lynch stated it is tough to "catch" people.

Atty. Logsdon said this playground will be "researched" and City administration will figure out the best solution for the City.

Comments from Mayor: None-absent.

Comments from City Administrator: Lynch said he did have a call with HFA Public Accountants, the new auditors for the City. He said the City should be "caught up" with their audits by the end of year. He stated they are good auditors, and the City has a good actuary.

Lynch stated he has started the 2025 draft budget for the City. He said there was a recent staff meeting. Lynch said City department managers will be meeting with him in the next several weeks. He said he alerted the managers that they should meet, also, with City Council to discuss their department needs.

Perry asked Lynch if the City has put out any bids for refinancing for the City paving project. Lynch stated Ryan Hottenstein said if the City moves ahead with the bond, the 2023 audit should be done, at least by December. He said the auditors stated they have "no problem" with getting the audit completed.

Perry asked if the City will have a "hole" in the budget when the City will not be receiving the HCA payment. Lynch said the City took their 2025 payment in 2016. He said the City took an advanced payment, in 2016, from the HCA. Lynch stated the amount of the payment was \$425,000.

Perry stated the City, also, will have a "balloon" payment due. Lynch said the payment goes up to \$170,000 for the 2018 financing the City did.

Perry asked if the Cops grant is still available. Lynch stated 2024 will be the last year for the Cops grant.

Comments from Council: Ondishin stated there are many improvements to the “taxiway” at the Hazleton City Municipal Airport. He asked Lynch if this is FAA money being used for the project. Lynch said, “he believes so”. Ondishin said Dave Chronowski, Hazleton City Airport Director, needs to come to a City Council meeting to discuss the projects at the Hazleton City Municipal Airport.

Ondishin said the Old M&T Bank building, currently, “houses” Pathway to Life with a new parking lot being constructed.

Ondishin stated the Hazleton Rotary Wine & Beer Festival will be held at City View Park on August 24th.

Bruno asked Lynch if he could get a report, to City Council, on what was done with the street improvements, and paving, in the City. Lynch said he does not keep a report of the street paving and improvements. He said this information would need to come from Frank Vito, DPW Director. He said there is one smaller street project being done, coming from the General Fund, in the amount of \$230,000. Perry stated utility work will slow down the City street paving project. Bruno asked if all the money was not used, where would this money go. Lynch said it would stay in the City’s General Fund account. Lynch said he would like to have the City have a “road program” where the City could let everyone know what project would be done in the future.

Colombo thanked the Hazleton Police Department with a recent incident at City View Park regarding music. He, also, thanked the DPW, Fire and Code Departments. He, also, thanked the City Sewer Authority.

Colombo said with school returning, he stated the City DPW Department needs to paint more lines, “cross walks”, for the students. He said Representative Watro conducted a City study, and it was determined that the City needs more lines. Colombo spoke with Mr. Uplinger at the Hazleton Area School District to purchase cones for the streets.

Colombo said there are “zero” car accidents, currently, after the change in parking on Poplar Street. He said this is much safer for children and adults crossing the road.

Colombo said as in past years, there will be a 911 Memorial Mass at Holy Annunciation Church @ 6 p.m. He reminded all, “to never forget 911”.

Perry thanked the Hazleton Police Department for the City’s National Night Out.

Perry expressed his displeasure at the Hazleton Area School District for denying a tax break, for the Allen Ridge project, for new home builders in the City. He said these new homeowners will be paying school taxes. He stated the City needs more affordable housing.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned.