

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026**

Call to Order: Council met at a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:19 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 (*via telephone*); Ondishin-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of August 25, 2026, Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: Council President Perry announced the dollar amounts of the 2027 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) for each of the four pension plans, as follows:

- ***Police Pension Plan - \$2,248,730***
- ***Firemen Pension Plan - \$2,389,376***
- ***Non-Uniformed Pension Plan - \$58,717***
- ***Public Transit-\$0***

2. City Fire Department Manager, Donald Leshko, discussed his department's 2027 budget needs.

Leshko stated the City Fire Department currently has 24 members, including himself and one deputy fire chief. He said Brian Mandak would be replaced. Leshko mentioned that the fire department will, also, hire one additional deputy fire chief. He said he is going to ask for four more fire department members.

Leshko said the fire department, currently, has a SAFER grant for eight more firefighters. He said his department has tremendous support, for the grant, from local and federal officials. The fire department is using their grant money on upgrading their buildings. The work includes painting, improvements in the gear room with asbestos tile removal, working on outside walls, and repointing brick on buildings and wall repairs, all being done with grant money.

Leshko mentioned the City is "running" over 1,000 fire responses in one year. He said the next apparatus, up for repair, is a 2008 vehicle. He said the City will refurbish this vehicle, with the motor and powertrain being "solid".

Ondishin asked if the City could have a rescue squad "go out" to the fires. Leshko said with the current staffing, they need to send the amount of apparatus out, with two engines going out. Perry asked how many firefighters work in one shift. Leshko stated there are five members "per platoon", with a minimum of three per shift. Perry asked if the number of firefighters has gone "up or down" since he was hired. Leshko said the staffing is stagnant. The volunteer staffing is being hit "hard" and is not good, even throughout the commonwealth. There are a lot of older fire volunteers, with a few younger ones. He said the City fire department will be having

about 1 or 2 retirements in 2027. He said hiring new firefighters would need to be sent to the academy for six-month training.

Perry asked what the funding would be to hire about five new firefighters. Mayor Cusat said it is about \$100,000 per hire. He said a lot of new hires are younger and single. He mentioned the savings have been, recently, with the health insurance costs.

Leshko stated he hopes the City will receive a SAFER grant. He mentioned the agency is starting to let municipalities know, this week, if they received the funding.

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): Dee Deakos, 43 Mine Street, Hazleton, spoke of Resolution 2026-51- A Resolution of the City of Hazleton, County of Luzerne, Authorizing the Purchase of Real Property Located at 702 W. Broad Street, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, for Purposes of Redevelopment. She stated the City cannot afford this building. Deakos mentioned where the City would get the \$1,300,000 for the building. She said the City needs their police and fire departments. Deakos stated either a state or federal official could get funding money for this. Deakos said the City does not need to go back into ACT 47.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

Ordinance 2026-17

An Ordinance Amending Chapter 525, Vehicles and Traffic, and Chapter 325, Parking, of the Code of the City of Hazleton to Establish Westbound One-Way Traffic on Juniper Street Between Laurel Street and South Church Street; Provide for a Proposed Fifteen Mile Per-Hour General Speed Limit Subject to an Engineering and Traffic Investigation; Authorize Angled Parking and Designated School-Bus Loading and Short-Term Daycare Parking Along Juniper Street; Provide for Additional Parking on the West Side of Laurel Street; and Provide for Implementation, Enforcement, Severability, and an Effective Date **(1st READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said this ordinance addresses the traffic circulation and parking in the vicinity of the Mericle family YMCA on Juniper Street. It is to establish a one-way on Juniper Street between Laurel and South Church Street. The vehicles would travel, only, westward from Laurel towards Church Street. There would be a 15-mile per hour speed limit along Juniper Street. This is subject to engineering and traffic investigations. This area is not designated as a school zone.

Bruno asked if the 15-mile per hour speed limit could be "time related", with this being enforced only

during the day, and not at night. Atty. Logsdon stated he will investigate this.

Nilles asked if there is a layout of the proposed area. Atty. Logsdon forwarded a copy of Exhibit A for council to review.

Leshko stated, from a fire department “standpoint”, the City high rises are on a two-way street.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1st READING

Ordinance 2026-18

An Ordinance Amending Chapter 138, ARTICLE IV, of the Code of the City of Hazleton, Relating to Limitations on the Number of Animals, Transitional Permits, and Enforcement (**1st READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Colombo asked if this ordinance could include cats. Atty. Logsdon said this wording could be added. He said this ordinance is to clarify the existing limit of number of animals allowed in a household. He said the limit is four animals, six months of age or older. Any resident having more than four animals, the City residents would have 60 days, after the ordinance takes effect, to apply for a transitional permit. This ordinance also establishes procedures for registration, and continues the disability considerations. He mentioned this ordinance came from the Code Department.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY ON 1st READING

(2ND READINGS)

None

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2026-51

A Resolution of the City of Hazleton, County of Luzerne, Authorizing the Purchase of Real Property Located at 702 W. Broad Street, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, for Purposes of Redevelopment

**NO MOTION TO REMOVE FROM TABLE-
RESOLUTION REMAINS TABLED**

Resolution 2026-55

A Resolution Requesting Luzerne County Local Share Account Grant Funds for the Demolition of the Abandoned St. John's School

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-no; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

RESOLUTION PASSES 4-1

Resolution 2026-56

A Resolution Requesting Luzerne County Local Share Account Grant

Funds for Improvements to City Hall

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Gregg Pavlick, Barry Isett Inc. representative, stated this is for the remaining weatherization and regrouting of City Hall. It also includes some repairs in Council Chambers, the auditorium and some renovations in the halls. The work will be in a "historic" nature in some areas.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2026-57

A Resolution Approving and Adopting the Sewage Facilities Planning Module for Troy Ridge Development- Phase 1

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon stated this is for the Troy Ridge Development- Phase 1 Sewage Facilities Planning Module, along Club 40 Road. He mentioned Phase 1 proposes 108 apartment units and one clubhouse with approximately 109 equivalent dwelling units for sewage planning purposes. The developer suggested proposing sewage disposal through connection to the public sanitary sewer system operated by the Greater Hazleton Joint Sewer Authority. This resolution adopts the sewage

planning module as a revision to the City's official sewage plan. This is subject to review by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2026-58

A Resolution Requesting Luzerne County Local Share Account Grant Funds for Bilingual Public Communication Technology Equipment

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon said the City is trying to outfit and upgrade the communication technology in Council Chambers. Perry stated the HASD uses some form of this technology. Atty. Logsdon stated there is a wide variety of options the City could go with.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2026-59

A Resolution Requesting Luzerne County Local Share Account Grant Funds for Council Chambers Audio and Public Address System Upgrade

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2026-60

A Resolution Requesting Luzerne County Local Share Account Grant Funds for Hazleton YMCA Revitalization Project - Lower-Level Refurbishment

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

On the Question:

Bruno asked what the money would be used for. Atty. Logsdon stated it will be kitchen work.

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

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2026-61

A Resolution Approving the Sewage Facilities Planning Module for Caputo/Terrace View Apartments

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Atty. Logsdon stated this resolution is similar to Resolution 2026-57. It concerns Caputo Terrace View Apartments, located at 500-526 Carleton Ave. The development is 4 three-story apartment building containing six units each, for a total of 24 apartment units. There are proposing new connections to public sanitary sewer system. The developer submitted its sewage facilities

planning module that requires approval from City Council before proceeding to DEP.

Bruno asked what they were doing at this property. Atty. Logsdon said this was before the City Planning Commission. He feels their land development was approved.

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: Jim Ferry, 8 Laurel Hill, Hazleton, spoke as a citizen voter. He spoke of voter's rights. He said high-level federal officials are threatening immigration and the FBI maybe in the City. Ferry mentioned this is intimidation and is a criminal offense. He stated some Hispanic people will not go out to vote due to a high presence of police officers.

Bill Wizda, Hazleton, spoke of the City Code Enforcement office. He said the City taxpayers are being treated terribly. If a person has a vehicle on their private property, or a tire deflates, they receive a \$25.00 fine. They do not notify the homeowner so the fine could be paid on time. Then, it gets sent to the magistrate and the fine is then \$142.50.

Atty. Logsdon said it sounds like this person received a Quality-of-Life violation. He said this is different from International Property Maintenance code violation which a notice is required.

Wizda said someone told him the City resident has 5 days to pay for the violation. Atty. Logsdon said the City Code office does work with residents to pay their fines. The Code Department does not want to attend many hearings for these fines. He mentioned the City is not trying to make money, but there may be a miscommunication problem.

Colombo asked how he knew about the \$25.00 fine. He said they received a notice from the magistrate. Wizda said he does not blame the code enforcement officers because they are doing what they are supposed to do.

Mayor Cusat said the property owner has to prove they were not served the notice. He said the City receives a lot of complaints from the neighbors about quality-of-life violations.

Perry said there is a communication problem.

David Dominquez, Hazleton, said on October 10th, 2026, there will be a Latin Festival at the HIP Center.

Dominquez stated he is impressed with all the City roads being paved.

Dominquez congratulated City Council on approving a translation system for the City meetings.

Dominquez spoke of the Homestead Act. He said a lot of the Hispanic residents do not know this program exists. Mayor Cusat said if the City resident applied for the Luzerne County exemption, then they are automatically eligible for the Homestead Act.

Dominquez said a lot of residents told him they are concerned about their school and property taxes. Mayor Cusat suggested they go speak to the PA State Representatives.

Bob Nemeth Sr., Hazleton, spoke of the taxis being governed by the PUC. He said people cannot park anywhere they want, cannot speed, and cannot block Church Street.

He commended the City police and fire departments for doing their jobs. Nemeth mentioned that the Code Department needs to be professionally managed. He said he received a citation for high weeds. Nemeth stated there is trash and weeds at the Hazleton Shopping Center.

Nemeth asked who owns the St. Johns school. Atty. Logsdon stated the Hazleton Area School District. He asked why the City is getting money for this property. Atty. Logsdon stated if any organization needs an LSA grant, they need to come through the City's Community Development office.

Nemeth asked who owns the YMCA. Mayor Cusat said the Wilkes-Barre YMCA runs the Hazleton office. He asked why the City is asking for money for this facility.

Nemeth asked if City Council will discuss 702 Broad Street. Perry said no. Ondishin said the resolution has been tabled.

Nemeth asked when the City removed homeless people, behind Giant, if there were provisions made for them. Leshko stated there is a shelter on Wyoming Street; the old Boyle's Funeral Home. He asked why the City is going there to get rid of people. Ondishin said this is private property. If the owner wants them removed, then they call the police. Nemeth said Catholic Social Services has room for about 16 people. He mentioned the City does not have a shelter for battered women. He stated he will volunteer his services.

Jeffrey Sanchez, Hazleton, spoke of the City's citation process. He said his citations came straight from the court, and not from the City.

Sanchez said he does business all over the area. He asked if the City could put the permits online. He said this would save people a lot of time. He said Freeland has an online permit process, and Hazle Township is implementing this.

Sanchez spoke of work permits. He said the price of regular permits is pretty high in the City.

Atty. Logsdon stated he will talk to the Code Department regarding this issue.

Comments from Mayor: None

Comments from City Administrator: None- absent.

Comments from Council: Bruno said it would be good for the City to get the permits online.

Mayor Cusat said the City is working for the past 13 months to update the City's website. He stated the City changed companies again.

Bruno spoke of the person who said that City Council "cut him off" from talking at the podium. He mentioned Perry tried to call him back to speak. He said no one tried to "cut him off".

Bruno spoke of the comment about police officer intimidation in the City elections. He said he would be an advocate for an ID to vote. Bruno said the police should not be intimidating anyone. Ondishin agreed.

Colombo thanked Mayor Cusat for changing the clock to the color "purple" for Suicide Prevention month. Mayor Cusat stated the City has been changing the colors for about 1 ½ years for any cause.

Colombo thanked Chief Leshko for the 9/11 Memorial Church. He said he made some comments, as is sorry for that.

Colombo mentioned the Hometown Heroes Banners for the USA 25th Anniversary are up on Broad Street. The banners will be up until November. Nilles stated any organization could put up a banner for a veteran.

Nilles asked if there was any more information on the Beech Street sinkhole. Mayor Cusat said the City does not have the capability to fix the hole. He mentioned Gregg Pavlick, Barry Isett and Associates, is working on this issue. The City will have to get an outside agency to repair this.

Nilles asked where the City is with the paving project. Mayor Cusat said the City is in Phase II. He said 1st – 21st Streets are done. If time allows, Vine, Alter, Locust, Grant, Peace and James Streets will be done, and 15th – 22nd Streets. With Phase III, Diamond and Broad Streets will be done. With Phase IV, the Heights area will be done. He mentioned, over the winter, small projects will be done. He said with the HCA agreement, the City will have \$1,000,000/ year for paving. Mayor Cusat said the City is looking to do the alleyways "themselves".

Ondishin asked about Buttonwood Street. Mayor Cusat said Buttonwood is getting "ripped up" by UGI.

Bruno stated there are resources, at the Hazleton Police Department, for battered women. He was told about a recent incident. He called the police department and was given an anonymous telephone number. They also covered their rent and helped them get jobs. Mayor Cusat said this department, at the police department, is great.

Colombo said the homeless people, from behind Giant, were placed somewhere. Mayor Cusat said the Hazleton police were there to remove them from the property.

Perry said the stop sign on 17th & Carson Streets looks great.

Perry said the City has the best Flock System they have ever had. He said the City is becoming a safer community because of the system.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.