

MINUTES

HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL

INAUGURATION/REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2018

Call to Order: Council met for the inauguration ceremony and regular meeting on Tuesday, January 2, 2018 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

Silent Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance: An invocation was given by Father Mariusz Beczek and followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of Outgoing Council: Cuozzo-Present; Gavio-Present; Mope-Present; Sosar-Present; Mundie-Present

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the December 27th, 2017 Regular meeting were unanimously approved.

Remarks of Outgoing/Current City Council members and other City Officials:

Gavio congratulated the new city council members. He thanked Jack Mundie for his 16 years of service. He said there were times they disagreed, but was not personal. He thanked Dave Sosar and Grace Cuozzo for their service. He wished them all the best. He said they will continue to fight for the city.

Mope said it was a privilege to serve with Jack Mundie, Dave Sosar, and Grace Cuozzo. She said she is looking forward to working with the new council members.

Cuozzo thanked Jack Mundie, Jean Mope, Dave Sosar, and Bob Gavio. She said she took the city council seat, as an appointment, two years ago. She said she thought the city would be much further ahead with Mayor Cusat's office. She said this form of government has been twisted, maligned, and mangled in every form. She said this form of government needs to be used properly. She said Mayor Cusat has been a "big disappointment". Cuozzo stated it is not to benefit Mayor Cusat and his friends. She said the residents cannot afford it. She said he has done everything to block the benefit of the majority of the city's residents. She said the residents will have no one to blame but the past and present mayor.

Sosar said he has enjoyed working with Jean, Jack, Grace and Bob. He wished the new council members luck. Sosar said nothing is greater than given the confidence to represent the city residents. He said also the confidence in the responsibility to represent them. He said the new council members will have some difficult decisions to make. He said they owe nothing to anyone in the city government, but to the residents of this town. He said he will always attend the city council meetings. Sosar said he is not "going away". He said he has worked with Jean Mope more than any other council member.

Rabo thanked Dave Sosar, Jack Mundie, and Grace Cuzzo for their service. He said he looks forward to seeing what the new city council members will do.

Mundie wished the new city council members all the best. He also thanked the current city council members. He thanked all the previous council's. He advised the new city council members to do what they think is right. He said the city council is for both the rich and the poor of the city. He said he and Dave Sosar will offer their help. He said Mayor Cusat has some good and bad ideas. Mundie said he is against selling both the Hazleton Sewer & Water Authorities. He said it needs to be protected. He thanked the residents of Hazleton in having his trust for the past 16 years.

AT THIS TIME, JUDGE JOSEPH ZOLA ADMINISTERED THE OATH'S OF OFFICE TO THE NEW CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS- ALLISON BARLETTA, ANTHONY COLOMBO, AND JAMES PERRY.

Roll Call of New Council: Barletta-Present; Colombo-Present; Gavio-Present; Mope-Present; Perry-Present.

Remarks by Newly Elected Council Members: Allison Barletta thanked everyone for coming to the Inauguration. She thanked Jack Mundie, Grace Cuzzo, and Dave Sosar for their service. She thanked the city of Hazleton's residents for voting for her. She said she will work wholeheartedly and will do what is right for the city.

Anthony Colombo thanked Grace Cuzzo, Jack Mundie, and Dave Sosar for their dedicated service to the city. He thanked the city residents for having the confidence in him. He said he will work with the city council members and Mayor Cusat to move the city forward. He said there is an "open door" policy. Colombo said he loves the city of Hazleton.

Perry thanked his family, especially his wife, for letting him come back to city council. He said he will use his integrity and honesty for change in the city. Perry said he is a proponent for change which, he stated, is needed in the city of Hazleton. He thanked the residents for their support.

At this point, Jean Mope announced that Council will now appoint the Council President and Vice President for the year 2018.

New Business:

Appointment of President and Vice President of Council:

Resolution 2018-1 Appointment of President of Council- Bob Gavio

Presented by Mope. Seconded by Barletta.

Roll Call: Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Gavio-yes; Mope-yes; Perry-yes

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2018-2 Appointment of Vice President of Council- Allison Barletta

Presented by Gavio. Seconded by Mope.

Bob Gavio nominated Allison Barletta. Mope seconded.

Anthony Colombo nominated James Perry. Perry seconded.

GAVIO MADE A MOTION TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS. MOPE SECONDED.

Roll Call: Barletta-Barletta; Colombo-Perry; Gavio-Barletta; Mope-Barletta; Perry-Perry

BARLETTA NOMINATED BY 3-2 VOTE

RESOLUTION PASSES 3-2

Gavio stated he wants a consensus from everyone on when the next city council meeting will be, including Mayor Cusat. Mope suggested the next city council meeting should be on January 16, 2018. Gavio said it needs to be much sooner to vote and pass the city of Hazleton's budget. Mayor Cusat agreed. Gavio said city council needs representation from Atty. Donald Karpowich's office.

Comments from the Audience: Mark Rabo wished the new city council members well. He said there is a separation of powers. He said there needs to be a separation between the legislative and the executive powers. He said the reason is for both bodies to have power, not just one. Rabo said the people elected the council members, not the mayor.

Ken Zipovsky, 3 El Camino Road, Hazleton, Union representative for Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 18, said the residents do not realize what the Hazleton Police Department does. He handed out information on the Hazleton Police Department's calls for service. He said in 2017, the police responded to 11,056 calls for service. He said the total calls for 2017 was 34,323. He read the break down compared to the other cities police departments in Luzerne County. He said the city of Hazleton is doing 994 per service for each officer. He said Wilke-Barre is doing two thirds of the work compared to Hazleton. Zipovsky also noted the current city of Hazleton's police department's salaries. He also spoke of the total staff in the police department. He said in 2007, they had 44 officers. He said in 2017, they had 38 civil service officers. He said the Police Department did not receive a raise in the years 2016 & 2017. Zipovsky read the calls the Hazleton Police Department responds to. He said the public safety of the city's residents is one of the most important things the new city council members will encounter.

Jerry Speziale, Hazleton Police Chief, said the police officers are an “extraordinary group” of individuals. He said, currently, the police department is processing five officers to receive their federal grant, \$640,000, and remain at 42 officers. He said there will be a report coming forth and he will announce the next group of individuals to fill the police officers positions.

Sosar said city council needs to set the agenda for city council meetings. He said some of the dates, from the mayor’s proposal, are sometimes two months to vote on an ordinance. He said this is “way to long”. Sosar suggested city council coming up with a workable plan. Atty. Karpowich said his law firm is agreeable with any dates council approves. Sosar said Mayor Cusat is an invited guest.

Comments from Mayor Cusat: He thanked the outgoing council. He thanked the city residents for putting forward a government that will work for them. He said in the next two years, he will work with city council to move the city in the right direction. He said he needs to make a schedule that works for the administration and the city solicitor. He said the next budget deadline is February 15, 2018. He said there will be more accurate numbers, in the city budget, with new retirees. He said the new insurance quotes are in for the exact number needed to run the city in 2018.

Comments from City Council: Perry asked Mayor Cusat if his 2018 meeting schedule works for him.

He said it works for him, the administration, and the city solicitor. Mope said Mayor Cusat did not ask city council approval for his meeting schedule. Atty. Karpowich said Mayor Cusat is asking council now if they approve this schedule. Mayor Cusat read some meeting dates. Mope said it is council’s decision. Mayor Cusat said he made his council meeting schedule with the city solicitor’s availability. Mope said council needs to advertise the meetings. Mope said things need to be “fluent”. Atty. Karpowich said council needs to vote on a meeting schedule at this reorganization meeting. Gavio said he wants to take a general consensus to agree on the dates. Gavio said council needs to decide on a meeting to discuss the budget. Atty. Karpowich agreed. Atty. Karpowich said council does not need to adjourn until the January 3, 2018 meeting.

Perry said the new council members want to work together with everyone. He said the meeting dates work for everybody. He suggested council vote on the meeting dates. Perry said Mope is trying to “represent” for all the council members. He said every council member has a vote for the dates. Gavio said he wants to see what dates work best for everyone.

GAVIO MADE MOTION TO CONTINUE COUNCIL MEETING TO 1/3/2018. PERRY SECONDED.

Roll Call: Barletta- yes; Colombo-yes; Mope-yes; Perry-yes; Gavio-yes.

Colombo said council should have a meeting on January 3, 2018 to decide on both proposed schedules for council meetings. He said it is time to put the “bickering” behind.

Mope said she did not create the schedule. She said it has been “historic” and has been followed this way for many years. She said the meetings should not be argumentative. She said city council represents the people. She said if anything was harmful to the city, city council needs to dispute occasionally. She said no one needs to hold a grudge. Mope said council runs the meetings. She said she is appreciative that the mayor and city solicitor are present at most meetings. She said city council will do what is best for the city residents and employees. She also thanked the press for attending the meetings.

Barletta said city council will sit down as a team. She said they will decide a schedule that works best for all.

Gavio thanked his colleagues for his vote of confidence. He said all the new council members are all qualified for the job. He said he is thrilled with the young people in council. He said council needs to vote in the best interest for the city’s residents.

Father Beczek gave the benediction for the closing of the inauguration.

Gavio made a motion to continue the city council meeting on January 3, 2018. Mope seconded.