

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020**

Call to Order: Council met in regular session on Wednesday, January 22, 2020 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Silent Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance: A silent moment was taken followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

PERRY ANNOUNCED THAT THERE WAS AN EXECUTIVE SESSION HELD PRIOR TO THE REGULAR MEETING ON A PERSONNEL MATTER.

Roll Call: Barletta-present; Colombo-present; Mundie-present; Sacco-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the January 6, 2020 Inauguration/Reorganization Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: CAN DO Community Park- All bids were opened and read by Atty. Sean Logsdon.

1. Belles Property Management, LLC., Shickshinny, PA. BID- \$994,750. BID BOND included.
2. Don E. Bower, Inc., Berwick, PA. BID- \$853,613. BID BOND included.
3. Champion Builders, Inc., Kingston, PA. BID- \$786,650. BID BOND included.
4. H & K Group, Inc., Skippack, PA. BID- \$1,333,408. BID BOND included.
5. Bognet, Inc., Hazleton, PA. BID-\$796,900. BID BOND included.
6. Gottstein Corporation, Hazle Township, PA. BID- \$961,155. BID BOND included.

All bids were given to Krista Schneider, Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress Director.

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): Mark Rabo, 1st Street, spoke of Ordinance 2020-1-Amending Ordinance 2006-25 Regulating the Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, Providing for Application Review and Procedures for Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, and Renewal of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs in the City of Hazleton. He asked if there are multiple (3) per city block handicapped signs, and would this allow administration to allot another handicapped sign.

He also spoke of Ordinance 2020-2 Amended budget Ordinance 2020-2-An Ordinance Providing for an Amendment to the Appropriation of Specific Amounts Estimated as Required for the Various Departments of the Government of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania for and during the Fiscal Year, Dating from January 1, 2020 and Ending December 31, 2020. He said he has concerns with two items in this ordinance. He said one is Code Enforcement. He said there is a problem with quality of life issues, in the City, for many years. He said it is "direly" needed to have additional code enforcement support. He stated city council and the mayor have reaffirmed this, in the past. He said what is needed, and since the City is in ACT 47, if the ACT 47 coordinator can request additional code enforcement grant funding. Rabo stated city council can also put this in the budget. He said the ordinance for the vacant bank-owned and blighted properties needs to be enforced. Rabo said this would give code enforcement the funds

needed to sustain their department.

Rabo also spoke of the 911 upgrades. He stated Luzerne County is doing 911 upgrades. He said the City has done good work with being prepared with the police and fire departments. He wants to know if any additional vehicles and resources are ready with the 911 portables. He said Luzerne County stated the new vehicles would not be covered; only the existing vehicles would be covered.

Charlie Pedri, Code Enforcement Director, spoke of code enforcement and zoning issues. He said he is here for Ordinance 2020-2- Amended budget Ordinance 2020-2-An Ordinance Providing for an Amendment to the Appropriation of Specific Amounts Estimated as Required for the Various Departments of the Government of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania for and during the Fiscal Year, Dating from January 1, 2020 and Ending December 31, 2020. He said his request is for an additional two employees. Pedri said there are, currently, three full-time and two part-time employees work during the week, and one employee works on weekends. He said he can only be reactive in his department. He said he does not have the ability to be proactive. Pedri said his department may get five to six complaints a day. He said he and his employees also do inspections and "other things necessary" in the department. He stated he needs employees to "go out & check around" to make sure what is "going on" and what is available. He said they need to find out what ideas the residents have in their neighborhoods.

Pedri stated, currently, his department is 250 inspections "behind". He said these are the annual inspections. Pedri said these are not inspections for residents selling their houses or renting their apartments. He said these inspections are done immediately. Pedri stated these are annual inspections. He said with two additional employees, a portion of their salary would be paid by these inspections. He said the City receives \$75.00/per inspection. Pedri said he would train the new employees in the IPMC (International Property Maintenance Code) inspections. He said two or three inspections, done in one week, would be \$225.00 going toward their salary and would be self-sustaining. Pedri said he deals with abandon homes. Pedri said he wants to change things. He said the problem is he wants to be "out there" and proactive to do these things in the community. He stated he needs more people to do this. Pedri respectively requested to open the budget, under Ordinance 2020-2, to help to look and maintain this goal for the City.

Mundie asked Pedri if he can hire four or five part-time employees instead of full-time employees. Pedri stated he can hire part-time employees, but the problem is the employee, usually a college student, works for one year, and then leaves for a better paying position. Pedri said the employees are trained through IPMC classes which the City pays for and on the job training. Mundie asked if there is some City internet training or video training. He said the last time the fire department had gotten him free training for the code department. He said it costs about \$150.00/per employee. Pedri said this allows the employee to do the inspections and conduct occupancy permits. Mundie said instead of hiring two new full-time employees it would save the City money in hiring five to six part-time employees instead. He said the pensions alone are stressing the pension fund. He stated he knows the City needs more code enforcement employees. Pedri said when he started working in the code department, there was a total of eight employees in the office. He said there were two employees assigned to each quadrant with a total of four quadrants in the City. Mundie stated his father was the only code enforcement officer many years ago. He said then Mr. Wech was brought in to help him. Mundie stated this is when the City was starting "to grow". He said it is a difficult job, and Pedri does a terrific job.

Pedri said this week a resident called stating they had no heat in their home. He said the code officers could not get into their basement and condemned their home. Pedri found out that the resident took out some retaining walls and was going to turn them into apartments. He said a part of the basement was collapsing. He stated these are health and safety issues. Pedri said these are issues that are found on a "day-to-day" basis. Pedri asked what an ideal number is, for the size of our City, for the code department. Pedri stated the City should have between six and eight people. He said he knows, economically, this is not feasible at this time. Pedri said there are three full-time employees. He said

there were two major fires this past weekend. He said the code officer had to “go out” and condemn the property. Pedri stated he is available 24/7. Perry stated there is also paperwork to be done. Pedri said yes. He said it is not only being “in the field”, but also in the office. He said the notice of violations to be done and put into the GIS system. Pedri stated if these do not go out in 20 days then a violation is filed with a magistrate. Pedri stated the clerks handle the permits, rental registrations and handicapped parking requests. He stated every code officer does their own paperwork.

Perry said there is an increase in complaints as well as an increase in rental registrations to 124. Perry said there is also an increase in business licenses to 151 businesses. Pedri said most businesses are commercial. He said all rental registrations are done by his office. He said if a resident is selling their house, this is done immediately. Pedri stated the 250-inspection back log is where annual inspections are never performed. He stated safety inspections are done every three years. He stated, with two new employees, he can knock “these down”.

Barletta stated she agrees with Pedri that there are more employees needed for the code office, but she is looking at the “big picture” and at the business aspect of it. She said if there are ten people “thrown” into the code department, the City will still be “chasing their tails”. Barletta asked Pedri if he looked into the computer system, just for code, called City government for the Code Department. She said this reduces time spent on inspections by 40%. She stated, maybe, the City can do a grant or invest instead of hiring two full-time people. She said everything is done on an I-Pad. She said after doing some research, the cities utilizing this system said this procedure is more effective and efficient. She stated everything is on the computer, i.e.-pictures and documents. She said this will “cut back” on a lot of time and should be looked into. Barletta said it is all cloud based. Barletta stated this can be something the City can invest in. She said the company can do a live demo to see what the City needs. She said there are modules for inspections for playground, streets, code, and houses. She said this can be incorporated with every department in the City. She said this is a “little more” than the GIS system.

Pedri said the tracer system (GIS) has been very beneficial for the City. He stated Fire Chief Leshko has been putting his fire reports into this system. Pedri said there was always a problem for a resident obtaining a permit to determine if they need UCC approval or a \$65.00 work permit. He said all inspections and notices of violation go through the GIS system. Pedri stated the City is technologically moving in this direction. Barletta stated this is good being we are in the year 2020. She said this will cut back on full-time employees in their health care and pension in investing in this system. Barletta said anyone in the code department can log on to see “what is going on”. Pedri said he would like to get tablets for the code officers to show what has been done on a certain property and to see “what is going on”. Pedri said the officers can then log onto the tracer system. Barletta said there is also a work order on a property. She said this process will be more effective, efficient, and will cut back on time. She said adding two more people on top of not fixing what is needed is what should be worked on first. Barletta said she will send Pedri an email with all this information. Pedri said he can set up a meeting with them. Sacco said this system can also “print on site” and can transmit the information back to City Hall.

Mayor Cusat said the system the City has now does all this. He said the modules are very expensive and he did not pay for all of them. He stated the City, currently, has seven modules. He said the system has all this capability. Barletta asked what the cost of the modules are. Mayor Cusat stated the modules cost \$1,850 a month. Pedri said the code office adds on \$5.00 fee for permits for the GIS system. He stated this is also done with the UCC fees. Pedri stated the \$5.00 fee goes towards the GIS program and a \$4.50 fee which goes to the state. Mayor Cusat stated he would like to get printers for the cars which the police department has. He would also like to get these for the code department. Perry asked if the printers would need to be purchased through an LSA grant. Mayor Cusat stated they are not too

expensive. Mundie stated the HCA uses I-Pads in some of their business deals. He said maybe the City can “piggyback” off their system. He said maybe the City can use some of their software. Mayor Cusat said I-Pads are not that expensive. Pedri stated the tracer system has the advantage of allowing any information to be put into the database, i.e.- pictures. He said if there is a PIN# in the system; this means there is something “going on”. Barletta said it is worth investing in this computer system whether it is the GIS or tracer system. She said case studies show time is reduced by 40% per inspection. Pedri said it also saves time in looking for files. He said everything is in the computer system. Barletta said she just wants to give him all the correct tools and resources he needs. Pedri stated, thanks to Mayor Cusat, he has been using the tracer system. He said all problems are solved quickly. Perry stated Pedri’s problem is manpower. Pedri said the problem is just getting the people “out there” and “on the streets”. Perry asked how long it would take the employees to get “up and running”. Pedri said about 60-90 days. He said they need some training, on-the-job training and computer training. Pedri stated it is not a long process. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if the City needs to wait until the contract is signed. Mayor Cusat said no. Mundie states it is just a matter of pay.

Lynch stated there is no way to say, with absolute certainty, that one person will cost “exactly this” or two people will cost “exactly this”. He said there is a “whole bunch” of factors that come “into play”. He said you need to look at range. Lynch said when the investment is made, the City would need to be on the “higher-end” of the range. He said if all these things fall “into-place”, the money would be available to do the investment unless everything budgeted would “happen”. He said this is what the transfer process is for later in the year.

Old Business:

ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

None

New Business:

ORDINANCES

Ordinance 2020-1

Amending Ordinance 2006-25 Regulating the Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, Providing for Application Review and Procedures for Issuance of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs, and Renewal of Handicapped Parking Spaces and Signs in the City of Hazleton (**1st READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Barletta made a motion to make an amendment for \$85.00. She said it should be \$80.00 for the limited access signs to match the original ordinance in 2012. Mundie asked Barletta if the other changes should be made now. Mayor Cusat stated this may have been changed for sign installation. Barletta said the last ordinance, "she pulled", was 2012. Mayor Cusat said there may have been an ordinance passed, later, for installation of signs. Barletta stated this is the first reading. She asked if this fee should stay at \$85.00 until it is confirmed. Mayor Cusat said when the business license signs were made, sign installation was changed to \$85.00. He said the cost of the green posts increased. Barletta stated to void this amendment. Perry said this is if a resident wants a handicapped spot which is a permanent spot. He said they would then have a placard to match their number. Mayor Cusat said for a reserved spot.

Barletta stated she would like to make one more amendment. She said instead of having the monthly fee at \$10.00/month, this should be changed to a \$25.00-\$35.00/fee per year. She said this fee seems like a lot. Mundie agrees. He asked if this is for a change in the state tax law to allow, the City, to put up a handicapped spot for a specific resident. Mayor Cusat said it is to match the placard with the number. Mundie asked if the state just allowed this. Mayor Cusat said yes. Mundie asked if city council is allowing to match their placard to the City's placard and can only park in a specific spot. Mayor Cusat stated only that placard. He said if a resident has a handicapped placard and a family have two handicapped signs, it is no longer interchangeable. He said if a father and mother both have placards, and another placard is obtained for the mother's car, the father cannot park in this spot. Mundie asked if no other handicapped person could park in this spot. Mayor Cusat said yes. Perry said because their sign would not match. Pedri said the state law was changed in May, 2019.

Pedri (*inaudible*).

Perry asked how many handicapped spots are allowed in one block. Pedri stated three. Colombo asked is the violation just a "ticketed" violation or a towable violation.

Pedri (*inaudible*).

Perry asked if a resident wants to apply if the code department "goes out" to assess the situation.

Pedri (*inaudible*).

Perry asked Pedri how many new requests the City gets in one year.

Pedri said he would have to check on this. Pedri (*inaudible*).

Mundie asked how many handicapped signs there are in the City. Pedri said he does not know, but will find out and send this information to the city clerk. He said, every year, there are renewal letters sent out to the residents. Pedri (*inaudible*).

Perry asked Mayor Cusat if he has a question on the monthly fee Barletta had "brought up". Mayor Cusat said he thinks it should stay at \$10.00/month. He stated local businesses in the residential areas are charged \$10.00/month in the City. He said if the City makes it too cheap there will be a fight over how many residents want reserved spots. He said there are a lot of fights, now, over what resident is allowed to have one; "just because they got theirs first, I can never have one." Mayor Cusat said the City would need to make it enough that it would help the residents that have them, but not hurt the residents that do not have a sign. Mundie stated there are residents that

cannot even afford a sign. Mayor Cusat said the residents can obtain the \$5.00 sign. He said this is not for everybody. He stated the residents are "still welcome" to get the \$5.00 handicapped sign. Mayor Cusat said if the fee is lowered, some residents will be going to their doctors to get a handicapped sign. Mundie asked if the fee can be changed to \$75.00 or \$120.00/ fee per year. Barletta asked if the fee can be done yearly instead of monthly. Mayor Cusat agreed. He said the "thought process" is when a resident gets theirs the first year, the resident "pays-up" to January 31st. He also would like to make it a "multiple of twelve". He said there will be an influx of people looking for handicapped signs with fights. Mundie said the City wants to make it more exclusive or make it harder. Mayor Cusat said the City wants to give the option to the residents to help them. He said, in 2019, when the discussion was to reserve parking spots at residents' homes; he said it is not for everyone or is not required, but it is something the City wants to do. He said the City may move in this direction later on, which he plans to do, to sell other residential spots. Mundie said he understands, but city council is not all in agreement with his idea. Mayor Cusat said if a resident is handicapped, they can reserve a space on the street. Mayor Cusat asked why another resident cannot reserve a space on the street. Mundie stated this law can be passed, but there would be fights every single day. Mayor Cusat stated, currently, there are fights every day on the streets. He said this would be a prelude. Mundie said if a resident shovels out his space, pays for his spot, and the neighbor parks there, the resident would come out with a gun. Mayor Cusat said it is the same thing "as this". Mundie said it is different for a handicapped person. He said he does not think a handicapped person would come out with a gun or fight over this. He said if you sell a parking spot, in the City, there will be major trouble. Mayor Cusat stated there are fights every day in the snow. Perry stated the City should set the fee at \$100.00. He said if this is set at \$72.00 then "when this comes up, this would have to be set at \$72.00". Mayor Cusat said he likes \$96.00 "because it is divisible by 100." Mundie suggested \$84.00. Mayor Cusat said it is ultimately council's decision. Perry said it would be hard to go back and change it. Barletta said the City is coming "back in line" with the state law now and also having revenue "coming in". Mayor Cusat stated there are issues where two people are utilizing the same handicapped spot and someone wants this spot reserved then the other person cannot use it. Mundie asked who decides this. Mayor Cusat said city council needs to decide. Mundie said Mayor Cusat wants to decide by making it more expensive. Mayor Cusat said the general \$5.00 spot will be "left there". He said a husband and wife will be excluded from the same spot if they have two separate vehicles. Perry asked Mayor Cusat if he anticipates a lot of residents using this. Mayor Cusat said he has gotten a lot of calls for months. He said it "wraps up" around "snow time" and snow ban season. He said these are the things to think about when passing an ordinance "like this" what the complaints are going to be. Sacco asked if there is a reserved spot with a ticket 1234, the placard would read 1234. Mayor Cusat said yes. Mundie said this is only for a handicapped sticker from the state. Mayor Cusat said yes. Mundie stated then the state gives the resident a number then the City makes a placard. Mayor Cusat said if a wife has the number 123 and the husband has 234, 234 cannot park at the same reserved spot as 123. Barletta said the City will not "go around" and drive "spot to spot" enforcing this. Mayor Cusat said this will be a violation and does not need to be called upon. Barletta asked if city council can look at this in 2021 after this is put in to see if it needs to be lowered or made higher. Pedri stated this is a large problem with handicapped people parking in other reserved spots. He said he receives about 3-4 complaints a week. He said there is no other way to regulate this. He said, in May, 2019, PENN DOT gave the City the availability of regulating locations on the signs. Pedri said other municipalities, i.e.- Wilkes-Barre, has had this for years. He said from a legal perspective, they did not have the availability to do it. Barletta asked Pedri what their charge is. Pedri said he did not know. Mundie stated Atty. Logsdon noticed Penn Avenue in Wilkes-Barre had a lot of spots in one block. Atty. Logsdon said there were about seven reserved in one block. Perry asked if they say reserved on the sign. Atty. Logsdon stated the signs had numbers on them.

Perry asked if other city council members want to make an amendment or leave "as is". Mundie said this is the first reading and can be changed on the second or third reading. He said the fee would need to stay at \$85.00. Perry asked if the fee would be charged monthly or yearly. Mayor Cusat stated it can stay monthly, but payable/billable yearly. Atty. Logsdon said as long as, administratively, can take it once a year and send out a fee. He said if it helps the office take a six-month fee or with two months left on their bill. Mayor Cusat said it is like a business license fee. He said if a resident "comes in" in December

for 2019, they would need to pay for the whole year. He said there is no pro-rating. Barletta asked Pedri when the renewals are sent out for the handicapped spaces. Pedri said they are sent out in November.

Pedri (*inaudible*).

Mundie asked Pedri to get city council some Wilkes-Barre, Pottsville, and surrounding municipalities numbers. Pedri said he would and send to council members.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

AMENDED BUDGET ORDINANCE 2020-2

An Ordinance Providing for an Amendment to the Appropriation of Specific Amounts Estimated as Required for the Various Departments of the Government of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania for and during the Fiscal Year, Dating from January 1, 2020 and Ending December 31, 2020 (**1st READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

On the Question:

Mundie asked if anyone is interested in hiring just one person; even paying this one person “even more” having a Vector person and health officer. Perry stated he would like to hire two persons. He said it needs to be amended to add two new employees. Mundie asked Atty. Logsdon if it can be amended for one employee. Atty. Logsdon said it is “whatever way” council wants to amend this. Mundie stated it can be one or two. Mayor Cusat said council can put a basic number “out there.” He said we will make it work. Mundie asked if the City could hire one person. He said he is looking at the pension paid to the employee. He said the pensions “kill” cities all over the country. Mayor Cusat said the employee, usually, does not stay 12 years to become vested. Mundie asked if any council member is interested in hiring one employee. Barletta said she is interested in hiring one person and looking into investing in this system. She said it would help the department and cut back on cost. She stated it will be more effective and more efficient. Perry make a motion to hire two employees. Sacco sated she would like to hire two more employee. Mundie said he would rather hire 10 part-time people instead of two full time with pensions. Mayor Cusat said he can “throw” a number out there to increase the code office line item by \$100,000 and then can talk about where the money would be spent. He said city council needs to come up with a dollar figure tonight. He stated this ordinance needs to be passed tonight due to the timeline of February 15th. Perry said the dollar figure is \$135,000.

Lynch recommended changing revenue lines would be #301-3100- Real Estate Tax revenue, which would change the millage. He said also to change #331-3100 or #331-3120 which is corresponding revenue which the officers would generate. He said then the expense would balance on #413-5100- Code wages. Mundie asked Lynch how much it would cost to hire one person. Lynch said it is hard to say how much it would cost hiring one person because there are various factors. He said he does not know what level benefits they would need; he said anywhere from a \$40,000 to an \$80,000 range. He said hiring two people would be between the range of \$130,000 to \$170,000 range depending on what they need. Lynch said there can be people, walking through the door,

who do not need benefits and the lower end salary would be the cost for one employee. He stated it is hard to say "for sure". He would recommend budgeting more on the conservative side. Perry stated Pedri needs at least two employees for this sized City. Perry said he need bodies. He said the code office is so "far behind". He said this will establish the ground floor which is the code department. He said once residents see them "out there" people will not take advantage of the City. He said he recommends two people, whatever the cost. Lynch asked what council is comfortable with in raising the millage. Perry said about 3.5%. Lynch said for every 10th, the City is "looking at" around \$86,491 and add to this what the officers would generate in fines. He said \$25,000 per person is conservative which would be \$50,000. He said about \$120,000 with .07 mills. Perry asked what does this come to in dollars and cents for the residents in paying taxes. Lynch stated a 10th of a mill is \$7.50. Barletta asked if this is on an average home. Lynch said it is for a median home. Lynch said it would be 70% of \$7.50 would be what the household increase would be. Barletta asked if the \$120,000 would "take into play" with the city hall contract. She asked if there would be a difference in their salaries. Lynch said the cost would be "way under" \$120,000. Barletta said this is due to planning for raises. Perry asked if two employees would increase the average house payment to \$11.00. Lynch said yes. Perry asked if another \$5.00 would be added. Lynch said it would be \$5.25. Perry said the total increase would be \$15.00. He said then the residents would be told the City is hiring two new code people to help the City. Sacco asked if there was an increase of \$20.00 and two part-time and two full-time employees would help the situation. Lynch said Pedri can answer this question.

Pedri (*inaudible*).

Perry stated the City can add two more employees next year to see how these employees "work out". Lynch said .07 mills is \$60,543. He said "say" it is \$60,000 for generation and fines to increase line item #413-5100 by \$120,543. He said the amendment would be to increase line #301-3100 by \$60,544 and line #331-3100 by \$60,000 and expense line #413-5100 by \$120,544. Perry asked what the percent increase is. Lynch said as Sacco has mentioned, if the code office gets two people and salary comes in lower, then mentioned, with no full package of benefits, part-time employees can be hired. Lynch stated or the investment in this technology. He said, likely, the employees will cost "far less". Barletta said she wants a definite to "go with this electronic system" which will help the City. She said she does not want to be putting in money and adding people to be stuck in the same situation. Mayor Cusat said he gets solicitations all the time and does not know if it is different from the same system the City has now. Lynch said with the current relationship with Innotek that they may be able to "home brew" something. He said they work on the City's behalf as their IT. He said maybe they can "craft" something that integrates with tracer or Accufund. He said Pedri had mentioned Innotek can solve "one of the City's problems" by working with existing software to get to do what the City wants.

Perry asked if this is for two. Lynch said he is comfortable saying this is for two. Perry said the total increase for the average household tax would be \$15.00. Lynch and Mayor Cusat said the tax increase would be about \$15.25. Perry said his motion is to add two employees.

Roll Call (On Motion to Amend):

Barletta-no; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

MOTION TO AMEND PASSES 3-2

Roll Call (As Amended):

Barletta-no; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes

ORDINANCE PASSES 3-2 ON 1st READING

Mayor Cusat stated city council may need to pass one more ordinance tonight. He said the taxing ordinance needs to match. He said city council needs to pass an ordinance which states “this will fall into place with the taxation”. Atty. Logsdon said he will bring, to the next city council meeting, a first reading of the amended tax ordinance to reflect the new budget millage. He said there is not enough time to pass it before February 15th. Mayor Cusat told Perry to go “off the agenda” and add an ordinance. Perry stated he needs to go “off the agenda” and add a taxing ordinance that matches up to the budget ordinance. Atty. Logsdon stated city council needs to take public comment since this ordinance was a non-agenda item.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mark Rabo, 1st Street, Hazleton, stated in respect to the code enforcement and the increase on the tax, he asked why the City would want to project an increase, on the property owners, when the City can include the ordinances, on the books, that were not enforced. He stated the bank-owned properties are still “on the books”. Rabo said Pedri stated the conversions or zoning ordinance violations can also be included. Rabo said there are a multitude “of ways”. He said Mr. Cross of PEL, the ACT 47 coordinator, could recommend to DCED, on the City’s behalf, to add more funds for state money to be sent. He said these avenues need to be explored. Rabo said to “divvy it up”. Perry stated city council will have the second and third readings at the next meeting.

ORDINANCE 2020-3

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

Roll Call: Barletta-no; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes

ORDINANCE PASSES 3-2 ON 1st READING

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 2020-9

Appointment to the Hazleton City Water Authority

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Mundie.

On the Question:

Mundie made a motion to table per council president Perry’s comments. Mundie asked Perry if he is waiting for more people. Perry stated he is not waiting for any more names.

Mundie said city council may be getting more applications and there were still some questions. He stated the next meeting is two or three weeks away.

Perry nominated John Keegan. Sacco nominated Joe Zeller. No other nominations were made. Atty. Logsdon stated John Keegan will be voted on first. He said whoever gets the majority of the vote would get the seat.

Deakos stated this resolution was not on the agenda and asked if there is public comment. Lynch stated this resolution was not amended. Atty. Logsdon stated the issue is something new; this resolution was on the agenda.

Perry stated the city clerk provided city council members with a list of residents who applied. Atty. Logsdon told Perry “feel free” to take public comment but it is not necessary because it was on the agenda.

Mayor Cusat asked if the nomination is for Joseph Zeller III or Joseph Zeller, Jr. Sacco stated the nomination is for Joseph Zeller III. He also clarified the nomination is for John Keegan Sr.

Roll Call (For John Keegan): Barletta-abstain; Colombo-no; Mundie-no; Sacco-no; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION FOR KEEGAN FAILS

Roll Call (For Joseph Zeller): Barletta-abstain; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Sacco-yes; Perry-no.

RESOLUTION FOR ZELLER FAILS – RESOLUTION DIES

Resolution 2020-10

Appointment to the Sewer Authority

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

On the Question:

Colombo nominated Ted Sherrock. No other nominations were made. Atty. Logsdon stated, technically, this would be vote by consent under Roberts Rules but council can take a vote to “just make it formal”.

Roll Call (For Ted Sherrock): Barletta-yes; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

RESOLUTION PASSES 4-1

Comments from the Audience: Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, Hazleton, asked if the City still has a machine that does the hot patch during the winter. Frank Vito, Department of Public Works Manager, stated he does. Deakos said on Juniper Street, turning onto from Route 309, the one lane has many potholes that forces drivers to go into the other lane. She said this needs to be investigated. Deakos stated she also noted many potholes in the City. She stated while it is not snowing, this would be a good thing for the City to do.

She also spoke of the City’s parking garage. Deakos said she noticed a lot of college students using the stairwell and use it as a urinal. She said it smells horrible. Deakos said residents paying to use the parking garage should not be subjected to such an unhealthy situation. She said the graffiti was also not removed completely. She said the one for the police was cleaned. Deakos said there was another one that said “GANG”. She did not go on the second floor to see if this one was eliminated. She stated all the City needs to do is get a can of spray paint to paint over this. She said this is showing that we do not care for our City buildings. She said it is not fair, again, to the people who pay for their parking. She said too many people are afraid to come downtown. She is asked “how can you still live downtown”. Deakos said there are college students coming downtown. She said if this is their first impression with graffiti and a “smelly entrance”, this is not what we want Hazleton to represent. She suggested getting a Job Johnny to put outside so the students don’t use the stairwell. Deakos said there needs to be a

solution to this. She said she is surprised the police are not complaining about the smell or graffiti because they, apparently, make eight rounds a day in the garage. She asked, "where is our City pride ".

Mark Rabo, 1st Street, Hazleton, said there are two issues he wants to talk about. He said he saw, in the newspaper, the issue of city council obtaining a conflict counsel attorney. He stated he was at the county council meeting, last week, when the amendment to the charter was brought up. He said he was "dumfounded" when Mr. Cross was at this meeting arguing against the amended charter ordinance. Rabo said Cross stated the form of government, the county has, precludes the county from having a conflict counsel or a separate attorney representing county council. He used Hazleton City as an example. Rabo stated Perry was here, the last time, when the previous mayor prevented the solicitor to coming to the meetings. Rabo stated Mundie was "here too". He said we need something precautionary for the future. Rabo said he is not saying it must be done now. He stated future budgets need a line item in case, during the year, there is a dispute or conflict of interest. He said then council can retain legal representation, do a transfer, and hire an attorney. Rabo said this is so council cannot "be exposed". He said this makes sense. He said he agrees with Mayor Cusat on this.

Perry stated if there is a conflict then city council would need to go to court. Rabo said city council can vote to do a transfer, in the budget, to hire an attorney. He said he disagrees with Mayor Cusat on the state of the City address. Rabo said that Mayor Cusat said, during the primary election, that there are many properties being bought. Rabo stated most of the real estate, in the City, is being bought by out-of-state, absentee, slum lords. He said they are converting the properties illegally. He said Pedri can attest to this. He said when Pedri does enter these properties, they are almost done converting these properties. Rabo stated quality of life issues need to be addressed, as strongly, as crime. He said it is like a "link on a chain". If the weak link breaks, then it will break even though the other part is strong. Rabo said the City needs to address both things in equal priority- crime and quality of life. He said without one, "you cannot have another".

Comments from Mayor: Mayor Cusat said he takes offense to what Rabo said about properties. He said he bought five properties and is not an "out-of-state" slum lord. Perry stated there was a school board member who bought \$370,000 worth of property in the City.

Comments from City Administrator: None.

Comments from Council: Perry thanked junior council members for attending.

Mundie said his votes for the appointments; he wanted to wait and talk over some things. He said Mr. Zeller is doing a great job in the City. Mundie said he appointed Ted Sherrock the first time, on the sewer appointment, could have waited a couple of weeks. He said this is no reflection on these men.

Colombo said Happy Birthday to Sam Galski, Standard Speaker reporter, on his birthday today.

Perry thanked all of administration to coming to the meeting. He also thanked Pedri for all his information that was essential. He said, hopefully, he wants to get all the appointments straightened out. Perry said his goal is to get the \$2,800,000, that is "sitting up there" back to the rate payers. Perry said this is the right thing to do. Perry said he is looking for someone to return it to them. He said you do not get money back in this world. Perry stated if the City does get the money back it would be a "God send" in case the City would need to do something in the future in terms of what is done here in city council.

Comments from Junior Council: None.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

