

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2020**

Council met for a WORK SESSION on Tuesday, November 24, 2020 via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The WORK SESSION began at 6:03 p.m.

In attendance were City Council President James Perry, Vice-President Anthony Colombo, Allison Barletta, Lauren Sacco and Jack Mundie. City Officials present were Dan Lynch, Mayor Jeff Cusat, Police Chief Brian Schoonmaker, and Fire Chief Donald Leshko. Also, in attendance were PEL representatives Gerald Cross and Pat Moorhead.

Perry opened up the WORK SESSION with comments from the public.

Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of the 2021 budget. He stated he sent e-mails to all city council members and administration. Rabo said the information is in regard to legislation, signed by Governor Wolf on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, effecting counties, Third-Class cities and school districts with TAN Notes and LST tax issues in municipalities under ACT 47. Rabo said it would allow any municipality that has COVID-related expenses, budgeted for 2021, to get an alternative TAN Note under special and longer terms in response to the COVID-19 emergency. He said he was not sure if the mayor, city administrator, or ACT 47 coordinator are aware of this. Rabo said this was signed, into law, on Monday. He asked if Perry would talk to the ACT 47 coordinator, in moving forward and may help. Rabo said to have a property tax increase, of this magnitude, would further decimate the tax base in native residents moving out and small business owners, under the point, where they are crippled and will not go back into business. He asked city council to do what they could to cut expenses and bolster revenue from other places instead of property taxes. Rabo said it is unsustainable and cannot go on moving forward indefinitely.

Perry said as council members, they represent every citizen and business owners. He said they need to look out for their safety and welfare. Perry said they need to take them into consideration when making decisions. Perry stated the coronavirus pandemic has been the worst in history. He said they have a responsibility to the residents. Perry said they need to show them the City will give them something for their money and improve the City's services to them. He said he could say that the budget is "theirs to do with". He said he sat with Lynch and "hashed out" a few things. He said there are a lot more changes to be made. Perry said no one wants to pay more taxes. He said this is the first time, in history, in adding a line-item for paving. He said he thought he would never see this and was always paid with liquid fuels and Community Development money in low-mod areas. Perry said Mayor Cusat has a good plan going. He said there are extra things that the City departments wants and are essential. He said council already approved police cars, fire trucks and add other things. He said, moving forward, this will improve the City. Perry said they represent the people and is not sure if it will be "hashed out" tonight. Perry stated they will look at what they could cut or looking at a few dollars "here and there".

Lynch said he was going over the new total taxable assessment value, from Luzerne County, and the City's total taxable assessment went up to \$1,062,000. He said it has been declining every single year at 1.5%. He said this is expected after an assessment but said the City wants to see this stop. Lynch said this equals out to \$5,906 for the City in terms of tax revenue. Perry asked if this is an indication of the City growing. Lynch said there are a lot of turnovers with houses or new construction.

Mundie asked how much the CARES grant is, what could it be used for, and when he anticipates getting it. Lynch said these questions could be answered by Joe Zeller, Community Development Director. He said city council approved this plan. He stated one pertinent, to the budget, was the position of a Health

Officer. Lynch said he does not know how the CARES ACT grant will impact the General Fund budget. Mundie asked Lynch if he knows what it could be used for. Lynch said if Mundie read the plan that city council approved and he would know what was approved by them. He stated how it impacts the General Fund budget he is not sure because he does not know what will be presented in revenues. He said specific to the budget, there is a Health Officer in there, on the expense side, and is not sure about the revenues. He said this would be "washed out" eventually. Mundie stated the position of a Health Officer is a "waste of money". Mayor Cusat stated the COVID money could not be used for anything that was previously budgeted for. He said the person hired in the Health Department is intended to do COVID inspections as long as they are being paid and will not be doing restaurant inspections. He said their time will be kept by the Community Development Department and paid out of that fund. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat what the grant is for and how much is it. Mayor Cusat stated the grant was initially for \$422,000. The grant could be used for stuff that is related to COVID and not used for the same purpose. He said the City used the money to buy a de-fogging machine, and cannot use this money, again, to purchase another machine. Mayor Cusat said if some businesses was given money for a specific purpose, the City cannot use the money to give out for these purposes again. He said it will be very hard to spend this money. Mayor Cusat said the City needs to become very creative. Mayor Cusat said with the county money, the City needed to put up a storage shed, buy equipment for Council Chambers, 911 radios, and bleachers and picnic tables for the parks. Mundie asked how much the City is paying the Health Officer. Mayor Cusat stated \$31,000. Mundie said they need to pay her health insurance and pension. Mayor Cusat said she does not need health insurance. He said if she is here for 20 years, then the City would need to pay her a pension. Mundie asked if she needs health insurance. Mayor Cusat said this cannot be a determination in hiring an employee. Mundie said he has nothing against her or her qualifications but is looking at spending the money. Lynch said the one thing councilman Mundie is missing, about a Health Officer, is there a lot of health issues that come up with code and are "intertwined". He said it no longer becomes a code issue but a health, welfare and safety issue and the legal authority, of the City, changes at this point. Lynch said the City has to have an actual Health Officer to do this. He stated in some of these situations, the City cannot wait for the state to show up and help. Lynch said this is a legitimate issue the City does not handle right now. He said the City would need this specific person or train a code officer where the "cross-over" occurs and then be acting more of a Health Officer then a Code Officer. Perry asked Lynch if there is any cost to the City because this position is covered under the CARES ACT. Lynch said no cost to the City. Perry asked how long this lasts. Lynch said it is just a funded amount and ends. Perry stated it is up to the City to continue the position. Perry said with the Master Services Agreement, the City needs to have a Health Officer. He said there is a need for one. Mayor Cusat said the City receives \$50,000, from the HCA, for a Health Officer. Perry asked if the employee has experience as a Code Officer. Mayor Cusat stated she was working in the City 14 years before going to West Hazleton for another six, possible seven years, with 20 plus years of experience. Perry asked if she left for a better paying job. Mayor Cusat said possibly. He said she came back, part time, in 2016 & 2017, when the City was really "down". Barletta asked if the money runs out and using it either this year or next, would it be council's decision to decide to continue. Mayor Cusat said when the Community Development money runs out, it would need to go to the General Fund and then decide if they want to continue the position. He said her title will be head of the Health Department, not a union position, and could be eliminated later.

Perry said Lynch said they almost "chopped" 1 mil off the whole thing. He stated the \$500,000 for paving and repairing of the streets could be "zeroed" out or could do whatever they want. Perry said everything the department was receiving was from the liquid fuels money and using some of this to pay on the PIB loan. Lynch said it monetizes the highway aid money that is paid out of this funding every year. He stated the funding "goes from" \$238,000 to less than \$100,000. He said only 14% or \$326,679 are actual obligated expenses. He said they need to first "hash out" what their thoughts are on anything that is a proposal. Lynch said obligated expenses, any expenses "going up" and taking the revenue side, the City is close to a negligible tax raise, if any. He said adding any proposals are driving up the cost. Perry asked what the proposals are. Lynch said regarding the police scope of the budget, \$400,000 could be "loped off" because it is covered under the revenue-side of the COPS grant. He said this is picked up, each year, "little by little". He stated everything else is an increase in their budget. Lynch said the capital

request, included in this number, is the Enterprise Fleet Management. Barletta asked what the other half is. Perry said there is overtime and false insurance in line item 101-210. Barletta said this is minus the body cams because they were already purchased. Perry asked if the extra amount is \$650,000. Lynch said the whole thing is \$992,211 but could “lope off” \$400,000, leaving \$592,211. He said about \$600,000 “boils down” to requests and some is “baked-in” cost increases. He said a lot of the proposals are to increase the line items to do more in the police department. Schoonmaker said one of the big markups is the increase in health insurance in expecting the new hires for the ultimate cost. Barletta asked if this would be in the capital line item request. Lynch said no. Perry asked if the amount of money, to work with, is \$600,000. Lynch said this is his “unfunded request”. Perry said these are things they need to look at, and “lope-off” a lot of money here. He said they could cut a lot of areas and still give something. Perry stated the previous paving budgets were \$0. He said, currently, there is \$500,000 in this budget. Lynch said there are some specific proposals. Barletta said, for 2021, the City applied for the LSA grant of \$3,000,000 and might not get it all, may be half, and the PIB and Section 108 loans for paving. She said this is a lot of money with three different areas to pave the streets. Perry asked what the \$500,000 will be used for in paving projects. Barletta said the City has a lot of projects and may be filled for 2021. She stated the City could save the money, and look ahead, with a plan. Perry said they do need a plan. He said he was “looping off” \$300,000 “off the top”. Perry said this is more than they ever had for paving. He said there is a lot of paving to do.

Perry stated the City will collect the real estate tax rate at 90% instead of 89% and will give them \$70,000 extra. He said an extra \$30,000 in the collection of delinquent taxes is projected. Lynch asked if city council would propose these in amendments. Perry said yes. He said if they do something, like this, he would like Lynch to work this into the budget and present city council with this. Lynch said it could be tied into one single action and amend the budget... as following. Perry said this is fine if this is the legal way to do it. Barletta said they need to make sure the expenses and revenues balance out. Lynch said they would need to “pre-plan” any amendments to be made. He said if they figure out the numbers, on a proposal, it would be easier to see on the “back-end” and what specific things would be recommended in the amendment. Lynch said if they need more revenue, some are better than others and would recommend these first. Perry said if they decrease by 1 mil it would be 17%, 1.2% would be 14% increase, or 1.5% would be 9%. Lynch said if they do 1 mil, the City could do \$500,000 worth of paving and still do a substantial amount in the police budget. Perry asked if the City wants to put this burden, on the citizens now, with the current conditions. He said taxes “are something”. Perry said he wants to give them something with paving, etc. He said he wants to give something without going to zero with all the increases. He stated the City could do a 1.5% mil decrease and still give something to paving. Perry said it does not have to be \$500,000 but could be half. He said every mil is \$858,681. Perry asked where the line is showing residents the City is giving them something for their money. Sacco asked if they “take 1 mil” and “shimmy” a little of everything, does city council need to come back and tell him what they think. Lynch said he could make 1 mil work and keep \$500,000 in paving. She asked if they are still “decent” with the whole police angle. Lynch said he does not know how much would “buy into this” but it would have to. He said some expenses are just looking at what the City is spending. He said in the solicitor line item, if the City spends this again, then the City goes over budget or cuts-off the service and would leave the City exposed. He asked how reasonable it is to be reduced. Lynch said based on a direction of what amount they are comfortable with and what is the number one priority, they could put together amendments that are reasonable. Perry stated Mayor Cusat wants to purchase gates at \$36,000. He said this is something they could look at cutting. Barletta asked if the City just replaced a gate in February. Lynch said he does not know, but knows they are expense. Perry said he believes this is for the Green Street gate. Lynch said with COVID-19, they may consider to hold-off on this. Perry stated the City needs new meters that credit cards could be used. Lynch said regarding roads, it could be called deferred maintenance. He said if it costs \$2,000,000 for optimal funding and the funding is reduced, in an “accounting-sense”, the City could accrue this cost. He said if the City would do \$1,000,000 instead of \$2,000,000, every year is \$1,000,000 “which the City did not”. He said after five years, there is \$5,000,000 in deferred costs. He said, normally, the City would need to take overall mileage and divide

by seven to get a true seven-year replacement schedule. He said this may be “beyond the reach” but is the starting point. Perry said the City needs to look at the roads that are left and start at these. He said the mayor has a great map of what streets were paved, what will be paved, and what UGI is covering with their allotment of money. He said it is the most ambitious paving project in the history of Hazleton. He said there is no money for alleys and there is a lot of bad areas. He said he does not think the City could fund the paving at \$500,000.

Perry stated the City should not do \$70,000 for legal fees. He said it should be about \$50,000. Barletta asked why there is an increase in legal services to \$70,000. Perry stated it is happening now with going over 240 pages of the code book. He said Sean and Mayor Cusat did this every Friday. He said he does not know if Mayor Cusat thinks the e-360 codification will cost more “down the line”. Perry asked if the City is anticipating more in 2021, but a lot was done in 2020. Perry stated he feels the City does not need this amount. Lynch said the counter point is to “seize” this opportunity. Perry said the numbers they are throwing at city council are “just numbers”. Mayor Cusat said there are three union contracts to negotiate and will spend a lot of time on this. He said the codification will not be done in 2020. He stated the Zoning Ordinance needs to be completed and will spend a lot of time on this. Perry asked if the Zoning Ordinance will be in the codification. Mayor Cusat said yes. Lynch said the solicitor does a good job of itemizing their bills. He said city council could review their bills. Perry asked if this is not only for Sean. Lynch said it is time spent by the attorney. Barletta asked if Lynch could send city council members invoices. Lynch said he will send invoices to council. Perry asked if this is new to have negotiations in the City. Mayor Cusat said the fire department contract is every seven years, police department is up this year, the City Hall union is being worked now, but will not be completed in 2020, and the DPW is reviewed in 2021. He said the last police contract was done four years ago, and the fire was seven years ago, with City Hall and the DPW Departments being negotiated in 2016. Perry stated he feels they do not need to be funded at the highest amount. Mayor Cusat stated they need to look at where they are, this year, and how many hours were spent. Mayor Cusat said they need to figure-in 26 council meetings lasting about two hours, about \$300.00 a meeting and the number of e-mails going “back and forth”. He said city council could review the attorney bills on how the money is spent. He stated the City is utilizing the solicitor, currently, more than in 2016 & 2017. He said the City has spent a “ton of money” on right-to-know requests. Mayor Cusat said there are two appeals going to court and this will be a bit of an expense. He said, worst thing to happen, city council could lower the fee and not have the attorney come to all the council meetings, at the end of the year, next year. He stated as the year goes on, they could monitor this. Perry asked what the legal fees were in 2019. Barletta stated for the solicitor and the labor was \$123,000 and is “boosting it up” to \$180,000. Lynch stated if an amount is lowered, and does end up exceeding, there are options to move some things around, i.e.- a transfer in the budget. Barletta asked what the solicitor bills were for Mahanoy City’s recodification. Lynch said by the time he left there; they were at the same place the City is at now. Perry said the City has a lot more ordinances and resolutions to review.

Perry asked Mayor Cusat if he added \$36,000 for gates. Mayor Cusat stated it is for the parking lot, but the other lot he did. He stated the City has been using re-fabricated gates, at about \$9,000/each. He said he wants to pave the parking lot on Wyoming Street. He said it is “spider-webbed”, and it is falling apart when plowed. He said the idea is to repave this parking lot. Perry asked where the money is for this. Mayor Cusat said it is part of the \$36,000. He said it is the North Gate parking lot. Perry asked if it is on Green Street. Mayor Cusat said it is on Wyoming and Green Streets. Mayor Cusat said the City is using “hanging tags” for a lot of the vehicles. He said the City spent \$1,900 for tags for cars. He stated a lot of the parking meters are in dis-repair in the lot. He stated, “going to the gate system”, the City would not have to utilize the meters. He said the meters could be utilized throughout the City. Sacco asked if it would be a “pay at the gate”. Mayor Cusat said yes. Barletta asked if there was a gate replaced in February. Mayor Cusat stated it was probably the gate in the garage or on the Chestnut Street lot.

Perry said they could reduce the conflict counsel from \$5,000 to \$2,000. Mayor Cusat stated \$2,000 would give council about 20 hours of service.

Perry stated Mayor Cusat wants to “get out” of the mercantile tax. He said the City has no idea what the decline will be. Mayor Cusat said he sees a decline from the businesses, that were closed for months, due to the pandemic. He said the City needs to look at the small places that were closed for three to four months. He said the “giants” of the world will still be the same, but the City needs to worry about the small bars and restaurants. He said he does see this coming in lower. Perry asked if it could be \$80,000 or \$100,000. Mayor Cusat stated he hopes it goes up. He does not want to be short and is more pessimistic. Perry asked what the decline in the business license fee, \$42,487, is an exact number, and does he think this will be at this number. Mayor Cusat said it was lowered before. Perry said based on the number of businesses and the cost. Mayor Cusat said the number of businesses has increased, and all businesses will be charged \$100.00. He said this will be easy to calculate. Perry spoke of rental property licenses. He said he does not see anyone moving out of the City. He stated people are moving in. Perry asked why the court magistrate fine line-item declined, so much, to \$95,000. Mayor Cusat said this “bases off” what the City brings in. He stated the courts have been closed, and will be closed until January, 2021. He said the City will not recognize anything for half of November into December. Mayor Cusat stated they were closed earlier this year. Barletta said this should be an increase for 2021 with the vaccine. She stated the City should, hopefully, return to normal, and fix some issues that went through the magistrate’s office. Perry agreed. He said it would be a decline but not as “steep of a decline”. Perry spoke of Parking Fines. He stated there are not as many people parking, but, hopefully, things will be better by March, and everybody should be taken care of. Perry said this means people are “moving”, and parking. He stated with the “no parking to corner” issue, and if there are ten calls for this, he said the City could get one person to cover their expenses for one year. He said this is everywhere. Perry said the City needs to be more prudent to get “out there”. Perry asked if city council gets monthly updates on the parking fines. Barletta said when she asked for this, they could not give a monthly breakdown, but could get a monthly breakdown by employee. Mayor Cusat stated the largest income, from the parking fines, was the snow bans. Perry asked if the City had any last year. Mayor Cusat said they, basically, had none. He said this is where the “biggest chunk” comes from. Barletta asked how many employees are giving out parking tickets. Mayor Cusat stated, currently, there is one full-time employee and two part-time employees. He said, also, police and fire department employees could give out fire lane parking tickets. He stated the DPW employees could give tickets out for street sweeping. Colombo stated there should be an increase with all the employees giving out tickets. Mayor Cusat said the City had more employees in 2019. Barletta asked how many more. Mayor Cusat said there was one 28-hour a week employee who left. Perry asked if there was one employee who was made full-time and given benefits. Mayor Cusat said that was Tracy. He stated there were two part-time employees with 56- hours of coverage. He stated, currently, there is 35-hours of coverage, for the downtown area. Perry said these are some areas which would increase the City’s revenue. He asked if the monthly parking fines are down because people were not working. Mayor Cusat said this is probably why it is done. He stated he is looking to make a long-term deal for the parking garage and Chestnut Street lot. Perry said Mayor Cusat mentioned this at the weekly PEL meeting. Perry stated this could increase the monthly parking. Perry asked if this is a “one-time fee” and pay a set amount. Mayor Cusat stated the offer he has, on the table, currently is \$78,000/year for the monthly parking. Perry asked if this is for the parking garage. Mayor Cusat stated it is for the parking garage and the Chestnut Street lot. He said this would leave the City with the Mine Street lot. He said there are a few in the Wyoming Street lot. Perry stated this is a guaranteed income. Mayor Cusat said if the City comes to an agreement it will be. He said they are still going “back and forth”. Barletta asked if Wyoming and Chestnut Streets have nothing in them. Mayor Cusat stated Chestnut Street would be part of the deal, Wyoming Street has several with the pizzeria renting a few spots, Standard-Speaker has a few, and the Mine Street strip. Barletta said Chestnut Street would be in the deal. She stated it may be a possible increase of \$78,000 in the budget. Mayor Cusat stated he thought this was in the budget. Barletta said she did not see it.

Perry said these were the big issues to deal with.

Perry asked Mayor Cusat to give city council members a paving plan as to what he wants to pave with the money. He said he saw his map and this was done very well. Mayor Cusat stated it all depends on the PIB loan and if the City could execute this. He said there are a lot of areas that are not low-mod, in the City, that need attention. He stated the only money they have is the Community Development money. He said the Section 108 work has been completed. Perry asked if the PIB money could be used anywhere. Mayor Cusat said money going into the General Fund could be used anywhere. Barletta asked if the PIB money could be used anywhere. Mayor Cusat stated the PIB money is used for specific roads. He said the plan was from Carleton Avenue to Buttonwood to Broad Street, Muir Avenue from Poplar Street to Broad Street, Terrace Boulevard, Buttonwood, Hilltop and the possible creation of Davis Avenue. Mayor Cusat said this is in between Ferrara and Broad Street, by Dr. Rojas' office. Perry asked if it needs drainage. Mayor Cusat said he is waiting for an architect to "come back" with a cost. He said there are about 80 plots to build a housing development to try to create more of a residential area. Perry asked if he wants houses instead of apartments. Mayor Cusat said whatever brings in a higher price to bring the tax revenue. He said he wants to know what the City's return investment is. Perry stated, "if you put the road in, they will come". Mayor Cusat agreed. He said the City would go off the engineering estimates with the execution of the PIB loan. Perry stated there are multiple owners in that area. Mayor Cusat said yes. He said there are only two areas left, in the City, that are putting multiple housing units erected. He said he was trying to develop the tax base where this was one of the properties, he identified that this was a project started and executed quickly. Barletta said the City would have the PIB loan, to work with, on 2021, if the City receives this, and the LSA grant of \$3,000,000. She asked if there is anything else. Mayor Cusat said he is hesitant with the LSA grant knowing the casino being closed. He said he would be grateful to receive \$100,000, out of here, for paving. Barletta asked if he put more grants in for streets. Mayor Cusat said he put the multi-modal grant in for Wyoming and Alter Streets. Perry asked how much the PIB loan is. Mayor Cusat said the PIB loan is up to \$1,900,000. He said there is \$1,000,000 and another \$1,000,000 reserved for the construction "up the Heights". He said the City is waiting for the 2019 audit. Perry said the audit needs to be done before that will happen. Perry said Mayor Cusat is going to spend \$3,000,000 and \$1,900,000 in low-mod areas. He said also including the Community Development money in all the low-mod areas, this has been a substantial amount of money, and no one visualized spending this much money in the history of the City in paving. He said there is more to be done. Mayor Cusat said "thinking" about what he spent on Alter, Grant, and Vine Streets was \$500,000 in 2020. He said 15 blocks of Vine and Alter Streets had milling and a "1 ½ replacement" and Grant Street was skimmed with some of the "high points" taken out. He said this was \$500,000 to do 45 blocks, just under 2 miles. Mayor Cusat said with a lot of the other areas, the City is limited to the money available. He stated the PIB and Section 108 loans are being paid back with liquid fuels and Community Development money. He said, the yearly numbers, will go down, and yearly work will decrease over the years. He said there will be about \$100,000 left over. He said this is why it is important to get General Fund money. He said there are a couple streets "up the Heights" and some side streets, First, Second, and Third Streets. Mayor Cusat said the utility companies will be doing extensive work on James and Peace Streets, the Northwest section of town. He stated the City cannot go further Northwest. He said the only thing left, in Community Development, are the east/west streets. Perry asked if there is any money to use for alleys. Mayor Cusat said the money to use for alleys would be from the General Fund or the liquid fuels accounts. Perry stated a lot of the City alleys are narrow, especially in the Northeast section of town. He said some are better than others.

Perry asked Mayor Cusat if they could offer amendments at this time. Mayor Cusat stated city council could discuss amendments on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Perry asked if it would be just one vote on everything. Mayor Cusat said every amendment should be a separate vote. Perry asked if every line item should be voted on. Mayor Cusat said yes. He said he does not know how anyone would vote, and putting them, "in a corner". Barletta asked if the parking expense, with two part-time and one full-time employees, will be lowered to keep it "this way", or adding people. Mayor Cusat said, currently, there are four full-time employees. He stated, next week, there will be three full-time employees with Sherry Longo retiring on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Barletta asked how many parking employees are in the office. Mayor Cusat said there are two parking employees in the office, John and Faith, Tracy is full-time on the road, Scott and Dominic Foranato part-time employees. Perry said anything city council wants to add or delete may take

a while to vote on. Mayor Cusat said yes. He told Perry to make sure everything balances, to take their time and do it slowly. He said, in 2013, the amendments did not equal the budget, and it was “a mess”. Perry said he would need to talk with Lynch before the meeting. Perry asked if council could amend anything at the second reading. Mayor Cusat said yes; anything that is “in between”. Perry said if there is something to change, council could change it at this point. Mayor Cusat said there is a percentage, to change the budget, before it needs to be advertised again. He said city council cannot take \$500,000, and pass the budget, on first reading, and then “cut it down” to \$100,000 on the second reading. Perry agreed. He said there cannot be any “big jumps”. He said he would like to get a lot done on the first reading and would be less than in a subsequent reading if council wants to raise or lower it. Perry stated it is a matter of 3% being required for contractual obligations and healthcare costs. Lynch said the portion of this year’s cost increases represents 14% of what was in the initial budget. He said if city council has an idea of what they want to cut, councilman Perry could come to City Hall and work with Lynch on these. Perry asked if everyone is off on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Lynch said City Hall is open on Monday, but he is taking November 30<sup>th</sup> off, and will be back on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Lynch said Perry could e-mail him. Mayor Cusat said he will be here, all day, on November 25<sup>th</sup>. Lynch said he and Perry could get an email going “back and forth”. Perry asked if he could call Lynch. Lynch said Perry could call him on his cell phone. Perry said Lynch could give his cell phone number to the City Clerk.

Perry said if they are looking at 1 mil, this would be about \$850,000, and down 17% already. He said the City could get down to 1 mil and still do paving. He said decreasing anything else, they want, 1 ½ mil would be about 9%. Perry stated this is about \$1,200,000. He said he would like to be as small as he can with giving the police and street departments what they need, but not everything. Perry said they need to show the residents the City is giving them something, for their money, especially in this crazy “COVID time”. He stated nothing is going down, i.e. telephone, cable and electric fees. He said the sewer bills are more than what their taxes are. Mayor Cusat said it is \$129.00 x four plus the transmission fees. Perry said he wants to make sure there is more equipment in the fire, police and streets departments. He said the City is making an effort in this already. He stated the City is making sure the Code Department is going to be a “top-notch” department. He said the police department is the toughest, currently. He said they need to balance-out what they feel is good and what they want to do without “hammering” people in their taxes. Perry said no one pays their taxes monthly. He said everyone wants to be the lowest they could be and meet the needs of PEL. He said PEL is reviewing any changes the City is making. Perry said it is never easy, and everyone will not like what they do. He said he will be talking with Lynch as soon as he could. He said any increase would be a benefit to the citizen’s and not putting money towards debt services or bad loans. He said with all the services the City provides, they want to do this in the best possible way. Perry said they are only a “cog” in the wheel.

Mayor Cusat reminded everyone of the City Hall Christmas tree lighting event on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Perry said there is also First Friday on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Sacco said First Friday will be held in the downtown, on the corner of Wyoming Street. She said Santa will be there with vendors, food, and masks. She said everyone will be social distancing. Mayor Cusat reminded everyone of the Winter Fest at City View Park on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. He said there is about 30 food vendors. He stated they are setting up the vendors around the pavilions, if not under them, to give them access to more electricity and shelter. He said it will be from 12:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. He said there are a lot of Christmas lights there and under the pavilions. Rabo reminded Mayor Cusat to keep extra generators there.

Sacco said the city council Veteran’s banner program is live. She said council could email the form or residents could print it from Facebook. Mayor Cusat asked if it is working out well for them. Sacco said “We are Hazleton” is officially functioning, started on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Sacco asked if it is “stepping on the toes” of veterans. She asked if it should just be a “straight-up” a veterans thing. Mayor Cusat said she could get in touch with the City’s Veteran’s Affair board. Rabo said Luzerne County also has a Veteran’s Board. Mayor Cusat asked if it needs to be a veteran or a deceased member. Sacco said they

do not need to be deceased, either in “honor of or in memory of”. Mayor Cusat said he will take care of one.

Barletta asked how the City is doing with COVID-19. Mayor Cusat said there are a couple spousal contacts with a few employees quarantining. He stated, currently, there are no employees who have it. He said a few tested positive with the COVID-10 antibody test. He said they are trying to distance and keep their “doors closed” as much as possible. Schoonmaker said, currently, there is one police officer with COVID-19. Mundie said John Nilles was quarantined, at home, but is in the ICU unit of the Veteran’s Hospital. Mayor Cusat said he has a lot of underlying conditions. He said he does a lot for the City. Mundie said he does a lot for the City and the church.

Colombo asked Mayor Cusat if Lehigh Valley Hospital- Hazleton, is full again. Mayor Cusat said they are pretty “overwhelmed”. He said he has a call, with them, tomorrow. Mundie asked how many cases are in the hospital and the ICU unit. Mayor Cusat said there were over 30 on the weekend. Colombo said ICU was full, again, with possible COVID patients. Mayor Cusat said the support staff- i.e.- maintenance, cooks, etc., may be struggling. He said no one thinks about these people.

Perry wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. Colombo reminded everyone to wear masks and social distance. He said everyone needs to use common sense to stay safe. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Barletta spoke of the rental income from the annex. She said, year-to-date, is \$18,000, but only budgeting to \$12,000. Mayor Cusat said this pays twice a year, “six and six”, and last year’s payment came in January. He said, in 2018, the City received \$16,000 and \$18,000. He stated the lease is \$1,000 per month.

Perry asked if the camera is in Council Chambers yet. Mayor Cusat said it was installed and works nice. He said the speakers need to get put together. He suggested they all get together for a city council meeting shortly. He said he does not think December 1<sup>st</sup> would be good, but should wait until January, 2021. Perry said it would not be good practice, to get together, when they are telling everyone not to. He stated the goal is doing both, in-person meetings and ZOOM Teleconferencing.

Rabo asked if there is anything, being done, with indoor gatherings and out-of-town residents for the holiday. He said this would make it worse at Lehigh Valley Hospital. Mayor Cusat said the Hazleton Police Department will not enforce this unless something “comes up” if the police department would need to go on a call to one of these houses. He said he will not pull “a Cuomo” and look inside the resident’s windows. Mayor Cusat said the City is more cautious on the holiday weekends because of the higher volume of people. He said if the bars are shut down, he does not see an influx of people coming to the area.

Perry adjourned the WORK SESSION meeting at 7:23 p.m.