

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2020**

**Call to Order:** Council met in regular session on Wednesday, April 8, 2020 via Zoom Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm.

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

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

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:** The minutes of the March 11, 2020 Regular Meetings were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications:** None

**Bid Opening: Alter Street Streetscape Project-**

1. Heim Construction Company, Inc., Orwigsburg, PA.  
Total Base BID- \$289,319.67. BID BOND included.

BIDS were opened and read by City Clerk, Eileen Matenkoski. Perry made motion to table until City engineer can review bid. Atty. Sean Logsdon concurred.

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** Dee Deakos, 43 West Mine Street, spoke of Resolution 2020-34- A Resolution Extending the Declaration of Disaster Emergency and Associated Prohibitions. She asked what would happen if the state of emergency is violated. Atty. Sean Logsdon said the Third-Class City Code needs to be followed. Deakos asked who would enforce all the provisions. Atty. Logsdon stated this would be done by the powers of Mayor Cusat and city council. Deakos said there is no mention of the fine for the summary offense. Atty. Sean Logsdon said residents would receive the maximum penalties enforced by law. He said regarding the fines, he used the state of emergency proclamation, instituted by Mayor Jeff Cusat, for summary offense which is a \$300.00 fine. Mayor Cusat stated the fine of \$300.00 is up to 90 days.

Perry asked who enforces the state of emergency. Atty. Logsdon said the Hazleton police officers. Deakos asked if this will affect cars driving through Hazleton since they would have to stop at lights. Perry stated this does not affect vehicles. Mayor Cusat stated the PA State Police will not stop any vehicles on state routes- i.e.- Route 309, Route 924, Route 940 or Poplar Street. He said the vehicles will be stopped only on city-owned roads.

Deakos said council should be setting the fine under an ordinance. Atty. Logsdon said Mayor Cusat passed a state of emergency proclamation and this does not need to be an ordinance.

Deakos asked how this will affect the Hazleton public transit system and picking up employees to work at the industrial parks. Ralph Sharp, Hazleton Public Transit Director, stated the first Hazleton bus run is at 5:20 a.m. and the last bus run is at 7:14 p.m. and does not affect his department.

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**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

**(1<sup>ST</sup> READING)**

None

**(2<sup>ND</sup> AND 3<sup>RD</sup> READINGS)**

**Ordinance 2020-7**                      Modifying Consolidated Plan for CDBG Program  
YEAR 2013, 2014-2017, 2018, 2019 (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

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**Ordinance 2020-7**                      Modifying Consolidated Plan for CDBG Program  
YEAR 2013, 2014-2017, 2018, 2019  
(**3<sup>rd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2020-9**                      An Ordinance Approving the Revised Five-Year  
Consolidated Plan and Amended Action Plan for Fiscal  
Year 2020 (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

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**Ordinance 2020-9**                      An Ordinance Approving the Revised Five-Year  
Consolidated Plan and Amended Action Plan for Fiscal  
Year 2020 (**3<sup>rd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Perry.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2020-10**

LERTA Ordinance Establishing Tax Exemptions from Property Tax for Certain Deteriorated Industrial, Commercial, or Other Business Property; Defining Eligible Deteriorated Areas, Setting a Maximum Exemption Amount, and an Exemption Schedule; and Providing a Procedure for Obtaining an Exemption (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Sean Logsdon said the original LERTA Ordinance public hearing advertisement was for the March 24, 2020 city council meeting, but this meeting was canceled. He said the LERTA public hearing will be held at the next city council meeting on April 28, 2020 and the LEGAL AD will be placed in the Standard Speaker.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

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**RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution 2020-32**

Resolution Approving the Application for Traffic Signal Approval at 15<sup>th</sup> & Grant Streets to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Mundie stated there is already a traffic signal at 15<sup>th</sup> & Grant Streets. He asked Mayor Cusat if this is being replaced. Mayor Cusat said yes.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-33**

A Resolution Awarding the Contract for the Alter Street Streetscape Improvements Project

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

**Motion to Table:**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**RESOLUTION TABLED**

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**Resolution 2020-34**

A Resolution Extending the Declaration of Disaster Emergency and Associated Prohibitions

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Mundie.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-35**

Requesting Approval for Disability Retirement for Officer Shawn Conti

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if a doctor has approved Mr. Conti's disability. Mayor Cusat said this has been an on-going injury for several years. He said he is unable to be a police officer. Atty. Logsdon agrees. Mayor Cusat stated the paperwork says he cannot do the duties of a police officer. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if he is "going along with this". Mayor Cusat said this is an on-going situation. He said the police department's roster is still carrying his spot. He said with city council agreeing with this, it would alleviate on-going overtime in the department. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if he is advising city council to approve his disability. Mayor Cusat said yes.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**New Business:**

**None**

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**Old Business:**

None

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**Comments from the Audience:** None.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat thanked everyone for their support. He said the City is on the “right track” with the coronavirus pandemic and he had to make some tough decisions. He said the City is taking a step “in the right direction”.

Mayor Cusat stated someone has created a fake Facebook page of him. He said he has spoken to the media, WNEP, and with Sam Galski, reporter for the Standard Speaker. He said the site has been removed. He stated it is a crime to impersonate an elected official. He stated this person will be prosecuted.

Mayor Cusat stated the Department of Public Works Department is currently doing street sweeping in the City. He said the streets need to be ready for when the asphalt plants re-open after the COVID-19 virus. He said then DPW will be doing asphaltting. Mayor Cusat said the street sweeping needs to be done through the COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor Cusat said DPW will also be doing pothole patching.

Mayor Cusat stated that one ATV has been impounded. He said the community “came together” and is very helpful in finding the perpetrators. Barletta stated city council needs to review the ATV ordinance. Mayor Cusat said the vehicle code needs to be spelled out “in there”. He said the original ATV ordinance was “modeled” after Foster Township’s ordinance. He stated if the City of Hazleton’s ordinance passes then other municipalities will pass their ATV ordinance.

Mayor Cusat said he is looking at the shifts in the police department. He stated the City residents are complying with the curfew. He said the sheriffs are patrolling the outlying areas with the Hazleton Police Department.

Mayor Cusat stated the City of Hazleton needs relief and funding for the coronavirus pandemic. He said he is trying to “push” the stay safe and social distancing advise to protect families and loved ones. He stated Northeast PA has been recognized by Governor Wolf.

Mayor Cusat stated there are some hidden stipulations in some of the relief programs offered by the state. He said this money still needs to be paid back. He stated a professional needs to apply for any programs for the cities.

Mayor Cusat said for the City to obtain payroll assistance, they would need to hire their employees back for unemployment. He said the employees are receiving more money to “sit at home”. Mayor Cusat stated there are 39 weeks available for unemployment.

Mayor Cusat stated Colombo has delivered 30,000 masks to companies in need.

**Comments from City Administrator:** Mr. Lynch said he is closely monitoring the City’s revenues

and cash flows. He said he will get an idea of the impact from the coronavirus pandemic. He stated the City has had recent meetings with DCED, Via Uber teleconferencing. Lynch said DCED stated the City can apply for funds to replace lost revenue. He said "lost" MMO is "big". He said all the municipalities are facing the same issues.

**Comments from Council:** Perry asked Lynch and Mayor Cusat if the City will be receiving any aid, i.e.- for ACT 205, etc. Mayor Cusat said he has spoken with Senator Matt Cartwright. He said the concern is for the City to meet the minimum MMO (Minimal Municipal Obligation). Mayor Cusat said once the virus subsides, he will "keep pushing" as the year goes on for this. Perry said a lot of communities will be affected by this, especially the cities under the ACT 47 Plan.

Mundie said Tarah Toohill and State Senator Bob Yudichak are working on a bill, to be sent either to the PA House or Senate, regarding the MMO's for municipalities. He stated the MMO should not be delayed. Mundie asked Mayor Cusat if he has received any pledges. Mayor Cusat said, currently, nothing. Mundie stated residents are worried because they cannot work or pay their bills, taxes, and water and sewer bills. He said the only relief for people is the Senate-passed COVID-19 Relief Bill (CARES ACT). He also stated residents will have a hard time paying their taxes but will be available for an extension until the end of 2020. Mayor Cusat said this is why there are fees built and calculated into the budget for 2020. Mundie said he realizes the state will not "forgive" their tax bills. Mayor Cusat stated this is why the City may need to look at raising taxes in 2021. Mundie said this will have a big financial impact. Mayor Cusat stated the City will see how this turns out. He said they always look at the numbers from the previous year, i.e.- June, 2019 through June, 2020. He said the City will need to see "what the difference is" and adjust accordingly. Mayor Cusat said, currently, with the tax bill discount period, the City cannot compare at this time. Mundie commended Mayor Cusat for his conference with Matt Cartwright.

Barletta asked Atty. Logsdon if he could look into pushing back the date for the tax bills. Atty. Logsdon stated this has been passed by the Senate, but not by the House of Representatives. He said they will be extending the deadline, for property taxes, to August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. He said the local tax collectors will be in charge of this.

Sacco asked what loans there are for small businesses. Mundie said there are federal government programs for small businesses. Perry said then the federal government would "funnel" them down to the state. Joe Zeller, Community Development Manager, stated the federal government has not decided how and when "it will go." Zeller stated the City will be receiving over \$400,000 by April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, but the City was not told how to spend the money for COVID-19. He stated HUD has not released any guidelines on how it will be distributed to the states.

Perry stated the problem, in the City of Hazleton, is overcrowding. He said the population is a lot higher than is recorded.

Colombo commended Mayor Cusat on all his work in the pandemic. He stated American Eagle has donated 30,000 masks for the City. He also said Eight Oaks Farm Distillery, New Tripoli, has donated hand sanitizer. He stated the police and DPW departments are doing a good job in "keeping up".

Barletta asked Mayor Cusat if tickets are being handed out, to residents, if they do not move their vehicles during the street sweeping. Mayor Cusat said yes. Barletta asked who is giving out the tickets. Frank Vito, Department of Public Works Manager, said the Hazleton Streets Department is handing out the tickets. Barletta stated this will be hard for residents to pay their fine, currently, due to the magistrate's offices being closed. Barletta stated the City of Allentown is sanitizing their streets. Vito stated there has been no problems with residents moving their vehicles during the street sweeping. He said, maybe, there are 3-4 tickets given out daily to residents who violate the order. He said most of the fines are for abandoned vehicles. Vito stated the DPW is almost done, street sweeping, the City streets, with 90% of the work completed.

Mayor Cusat said all but two employees, in the parking department, have taken a voluntary lay-off. He said Tracy is actively doing the COVID-19 cleaning in City Hall. Mayor Cusat said Tracy has cleaned the second floor at City Hall. He said she is doing a thorough cleaning. Mayor Cusat stated everyone at City

Hall is social distancing. He stated the cleaning company is also coming more frequently. Barletta asked if the DPW Department employees have masks. Vito said yes.

Perry asked how long the signs, are placed, on the streets for street sweeping. Vito said the signs are placed 24 hours beforehand. Vito said the DPW will finish street sweeping in about 10 days.

Vito said there is also a garbage problem within the City. He said all playgrounds have been "swept".

Mundie asked Mayor Cusat how many employees have taken layoffs. Mayor Cusat said one Department of Public Works employee, three parking employees, and one maintenance employee. He said he is not sure about the Code Department. Mayor Cusat said he extended the voluntary layoff to all employees but stated there still is work to be done. He said some employees had asked to be laid off. Perry asked Mayor Cusat if the layoff would be for two weeks. Mayor Cusat said he will go by a "week to week" basis.

Mundie asked if the Housing Authority has had any layoffs or if the employees were offered a voluntary layoff. Mayor Cusat said there were no layoffs at the Hazleton Housing Authority. He said the employees are working remotely.

Barletta asked if the City's playgrounds have been "taped off". Mayor Cusat said no. He said Governor Tom Wolf is suggesting residents get out and exercise. He said team sports have been "halted" with groups of four or more participants. He said they need to distance 6 feet apart. He said there have been no problems at the City's basketball courts. He said he can "chain-off" Altmiller Playground. Mayor Cusat stated the police are patrolling all playgrounds for social distancing.

Perry stated the Hispanic community is reaching out to their residents. Mayor Cusat said there is a delay in translation. He said all messages have been passed along very quickly. Mayor Cusat said the county holds daily meetings. He stated they would like to start a Facebook campaign towards better communications for the Spanish/English speaking residents.

Perry stated the City does not have much testing equipment for the COVID-19 virus. Mayor Cusat stated testing is not a problem. He said the results are being compounded by a one week waiting period. He stated that Lehigh Valley Hospital-Hazleton cannot "keep up". He stated the numbers will not increase rapidly. He said the figures will not reflect this, but they are "there".

Perry stated former Mayor Lou Barletta has reached out to Joe Maddon. Mayor Cusat said Albert Pujols and Alex Rodriguez, of Major League Baseball, have done their own messages about COVID-19.

Perry asked Mayor Cusat how his meeting went with Senator Bob Yudichak. Mayor Cusat said Senator Yudichak spoke about the industrial plants in Humboldt and Valmont Industrial Parks. He said Senator Yudichak is "reaching out" to them.

Mundie said the self-employed residents that are out of work and the Hispanic residents can now apply for unemployment. Perry stated the state is now "back-logged" with all the requests. Mundie stated the state's website was not set up.

Perry thanked everyone for their work.

**Comments from Junior Council:** None.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

