

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

**Call to Order:** Council met in regular session on Wednesday, July 8, 2020 via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:13 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 June 24, 2020 Special Meeting were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications:** None

**Bid Opening: Utility work being done on Old Airport Road, Hazle Township, for the Hazleton Public Transit Authority maintenance and storage facility.**

Atty. Sean Logsdon stated he spoke with Ralph Sharp, Hazleton Transportation Director, this afternoon. He said the City received only one bid for the project. He said, for this situation, the City needs to keep it competitive and for the opportunity to receive more bids on this, the City is rejecting the bid and will be rebid. He said the new bids will be opened at the city council meeting on August 12, 2020. Perry asked if these will be e-bids. Atty. Logsdon said yes. Perry said then the City will move on from there.

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Perry stated he wants to go over a "few things with all". He said to remember this is a comment period; you may or may not ask a question and it may be answered at the appropriate amendment or ordinance when it comes up. He said his name is Jim Perry, president of city council. He said there will be a 3-minute time limit, controlled by the city clerk. Dan Lynch, City Administrator, will also be helping with the ZOOM meeting to have things in order. Perry said civility is our "goal here". He said when a person is called upon to please state your name and address. He said the Hazleton taxpayers can go first with them to have a say and then all others after. He said there will be no derogatory comments or inappropriate comments. He said people will be "turned off" if this happens. He said there will, also, be a 3-minute time limit at the end. He said on ZOOM there is a raise hand feature. Perry said it is somewhere on the ZOOM, pull down menu and raise your hand. He said city council will get to everybody as they can. He said there will be a strict 3-minute time limit. Perry said he may not see it and people may not see this either. He stated residents to be short and get "to the point". Perry said this is time to express your opinion on items on the agenda only. He said, at the end of the meeting, people can comment on other things.

Lynch said in addition to the raise hand feature, there is a chat feature and Perry can let Lynch know who can speak.

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of Ordinances 2020-18 & 2020-19. He asked if there are any plans on adding funding for the Blighted Property Committee that has been dormant for two years. Rabo said he has spoken to Lynch, Atty. Logsdon and some members of council on this. He said he would like to see this addressed, and “put in there” to move forward.

He also spoke about the Public Monuments Ordinance. Rabo stated he sent numerous e-mails and information about this. He said he hopes the process moves forward. He said it is a democratic process. Rabo stated people can express their views through this process.

Rabo also spoke of Ordinance 2020-16- Amending Ordinance 2004-33 (as Amended by Ordinance 2005-26 and 2006-1), Certificate of Use and Occupancy. He would like to know how many inspections have been done and are outstanding since Governor Wolf has allowed Luzerne County to go into the green phase. He asked if the two part-time hires, for the Code Department, have been hired full-time so the inspections can be conducted. Rabo asked if there are any requests for converted properties through the Code office, zoning office or zoning board. He also asked if anything would go to the surrounding neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area. He said if the City does not address the surrounding neighborhoods, in the downtown, there will be a “diamond in the middle of a junkyard.”

Mark Olander, 1330 E. Broad Street, Hazleton, said he has a little “quick history”. Olander said the king and queen, of Spain, ordered a report on Christopher Columbus due to the rumors of his cruel behavior that “reached back” to Spain. He said one boy that was accused of stealing had his ears and nose cut off. One woman who called Columbus’ family “commoners” was stripped naked, paraded through town on a donkey, her tongue was cut out and sold into slavery. He said as a lifelong Hazletonian and as a proud Italian American, he is embarrassed by the actions of Christopher Columbus and the way he treated people, especially the people he oversaw, the people of the Dominican Republic. He said he understands people saved a lot of money, for a very long time, for this statue. He said the stuff we learned in school about Columbus was not really the type of person he was. He said no one likes to be wrong. Olander understands it is hard to go back on something that so much money was saved for. He said when the City erects a statue, the City is valuing this person not only for their accomplishments but also the type of person they were. Olander thinks taking down this statue and putting it in the Hazleton Historical Society building would go a long way to extend an “olive branch” to our Dominican brothers and sisters after the rift caused by the ridiculous anti-immigration law that failed and bankrupted the City. He said the ordinance is very extreme and asked if it was modeled from another ordinance somewhere. He also asked why 75% of the census and not just a simple majority.

Mary Rapach, 847 E. Lackawanna Street, Olyphant, PA, said her entire family comes from Hazleton. Her family homestead is on Seybert Street. She said both of her parents grew up in Hazleton and her mother is a very proud alumnus of MPB. She said the Italian American community adopted her and took her “into their home”. Rapach said she understands the sense of pride, and with Olander “bringing up”, and does not have to cite the specifics because anyone who has access, to the history book, can understand the heinous acts committed on our brothers and sisters, in the Caribbean nation states, by Christopher Columbus. She said as Hazletonians, we need to recognize the statue was placed as a point of pride. Rapach said we need to understand the prejudice toward Italian Americans and why Christopher Columbus created this deity for the community. She said he was someone, to point to for the community, to say look at our contributions for the success of America. She said the destruction was worse than the contribution. Rapach said we need to acknowledge the importance of the role the Italian American community has played in the creation of the Hazleton of our history. She stated we need to look at the Latin-X community, particularly the Dominican community, in Hazleton now, and understand the importance they are playing in Hazleton’s future. She said it is because of this that we need to examine what our priorities are, as a City, and a people, to question if we are here to move our society forward or “cling to the past”. Rapach said if we listen to the pain that is in the voices of our brothers or sisters that live in Hazleton, currently, there is no way but to move forward with the removal of things that causes pain and work together with the Italian and Dominican communities to acknowledge Hazleton was great, is

great and will be great with everyone involved. She said she appreciates this opportunity as she is currently not in our mountain home. She appreciates all the work going into this.

Annie Mendez, 1075 N. James Street, Hazleton, said she has a lot to say about the statue. Mendez stated the statue represents the rape, genocide, murder and slavery of her ancestors, the Taino's and Africans brought to Hispaniola. Mendez stated it represents the atrocities that Columbus did and the victims. She is appalled the City is celebrating in times where society, and everybody else, in the country, is removing the statue that represents hate and slavery, with the past that everyone wants to forget. She said through the "white-washed" history, in America, we have encountered a moment where we need to make these changes. She said these changes include removing a statue that represents hate, rape, and division. She said it should not make anyone proud in a time where America is looking forward to making changes in society and do reparations. Mendez said when we are talking about reparations, we are talking about removing all the elements, to this day, that will cause pain to communities of color, like herself, and our diverse community. She said a lot of Italian Americans understand and know the history of Christopher Columbus who discovered nothing. Mendez said he killed more than 8 million people in her island and brought slavery to America. Mendez said even in his own era, the king and queen, of Spain, brought him to trial for genocide for rape and killings of women and children. He was considered, in his time, with crimes to humanity. In 2020, and through the years, we have "white-washed" history. She said there is nothing to celebrate or elevate him. She said it is like a rapist living in your house where you need to pay the rent, live with him and see him every day. She said this is what the statue of Christopher Columbus represents in our town. She said we need to look at this ordinance. Mendez said we need to consider what is happening in our American society. Mendez stated we need to think twice before creating an ordinance that later, would be, unconstitutional. She said our rights need to be protected. Mendez said we need to get the reparations we are asking for.

Maria Jacketti, 549 Kiefer Ave., Hazleton, said she was alone talking about the monument a couple of weeks ago. She said she had a couple of questions but were not answered. Jacketti said she will attempt to ask them again. She stated she was pleased to hear Annie and others talking about real history. She said Allison asked her if she got the idea from the march. She said she taught the course at New Jersey City University in Jersey City, Introduction to the Humanities Stone Age, through the Renaissance and through the Conquest of the Americas. She said it was about 30 years ago. She said the real history has been out there with Mr. Jim George at Bishop Hafey High School, the teacher who most shaped her life more than anyone. She said he was a Vietnam Veteran and we lost him too early. Mr. George never "white-washed" history. Jacketti said as difficult as it would be to face history, he always taught us to face difficult truths. She said when her husband "came on" at the last meeting, he said, "we need to make amends." She said this was the most important thing that he said. She wants a peaceful and integrated City. Jacketti stated there are a lot of Taino's in the City. She said the population of the Taino's during his tenure went, in Hispaniola, from 8 million to 100,000. She stated she got plenty of hate mail this week. Jacketti said she talked about Columbus making "chain-gangs" with ropes of the Taino's; he enslaved them. He also set up systemic rape of the women of the Taino women and died in prison as a criminal. She said the Taino lives were so undervalued and instead of untying the slave gangs they would chop their heads off and feed the bodies to the dogs that the Spaniards brought with them. She said it is true that the people who make the "engine" of business work, in Hazleton today, have given new blood and new resources, to us, are descendants of the survivors of this great Holocaust. She said it is so disrespectful, to them, to put up Christopher Columbus, as a hero. Jacketti said we can "put up" Dante Alighieri, an Italian, and "really do a dance here." She asked, "why are we doing this." She said this ordinance will cause a rift in our City. Jacketti stated it will go well beyond our City into national and international news again, get a "black eye" and be looked down upon. She said most of the world knows the true history of Christopher Columbus. Jacketti asked this question and said

the City has bigger issues to face. She asked how are we going to handle COVID-19 in the fall when it comes back with a vengeance, layered on top of the flu, when the first wave blends into the second wave. She said it is already mutated with a doctor finding a second strain. She asked why is the City pursuing this when the City has greater issues on the forefront. Jacketti stated this is a “no win situation.” She said the City is lucky to have, in the best elections, 2,000 people out to vote and the City is supposed to get 25,000 signatures. She said it is probably illegal. She stated she did a little bit of law school at NYU. Her instinct tells her this will get challenged in court and the City will lose. She asked why the City is doing this and putting forth this ordinance. Jacketti asked if the statue was threatened. She said she may not love it but will not “go out” and vandalize it. She stated it is a beautiful work of art but it is full of “worms”, the worms of history. She suggested taking Columbus’ name off of it, make him a generic European explorer, and it is no longer a statue of Christopher Columbus. She said it would be cheap and easy. She said this would eliminate all this discord. She said the statue does not bear a resemblance to the historical Christopher Columbus. She does not want anyone hurt on either side. She told Mayor Cusat she likes him. Jacketti said she still does not have an answer to her question.

Lynch pointed out this is courtesy of the floor for comment period. He said not necessarily that council would answer at this point but later in the meeting when the ordinance, comes up, and is time for council comment. He said they can comment then if they can.

Alberta Perez, 1996 State Route 940, Jeddo, Freeland, PA, said she lived in Hazleton about 15 years, and her parents still live here. She is a mother of four, local business owner and artist. Perez wanted to address the statue situation. She said she will not take up 3 minutes to talk about the history. She said everyone else did a pretty good job pointing it out. She stated we are a country that needs healing in every aspect. She said in order to heal and move on, we need to stop clinging to the past. She said, as a country, we hold onto symbols and to statues that do not have a soul or life. She said we make this more important than a human being and should not be this way. She said she is Hispanic/Dominican and so are her parents. She is a citizen of the United States, born in the Bronx. Perez said she has lived here long enough to see and experience discrimination and racism. She said she still thinks Hazleton is a great place and can make it better. She understands, on both aspects, how this can be a problem keeping it or taking it away. She thinks we can compromise as we are all “adults here”. Perez stated she does not believe in destroying or vandalizing things, as an artist. She said it took a lot of time to build that statue. Perez said it can be moved somewhere with a little plaque, of a colorful story, of what Columbus did. She said we can have facts of how he was a part of American history. Perez said a lot of Hispanic and Dominican people do not know the history and what he had to do with the Dominican Republic and all the other Caribbean islands. Perez said a lot of her Caucasian friends do not know the history. She said all they know is the “cute little things” we did in school. She said she would take her kids to a place where the statues are all together with actual history of what happened. Perez said we need to heal, to move on and work together whether we are white, black or Hispanic. We are all in this together and are all human beings. She said this should be the focus.

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## **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

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

#### **Ordinance 2020-18**

Modifying Consolidated Plan for CDBG Program Years 2013, 2017 and 2019 **(1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

#### **On the Question:**

Barletta asked Joe Zeller, Community Development Director, what are we moving here. Zeller stated there were some excess funds, in various line items, that did not take the amount of money that was anticipated. Zeller stated the money was moved, all, into adding into the streets budget.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 1<sup>st</sup> READING**

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**ORDINANCE 2020-19**                      Modifying Annual Plan for CDBG Program Year 2019 (**1<sup>st</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

**On the Question:**

Perry asked Zeller to review this ordinance. Zeller stated this is money received through the Cares Act. The restrictions are very intense as they are with all CDBG activities. He stated the City received, in excess, of \$400,000 and this is the budget he is putting forward, right now. Zeller said he needs to submit something to HUD. He said if he needs to change something, later, he can do it. He stated he just needs to get it together now. Perry stated there is a Health Officer included in this ordinance. He said the City can use this. Perry asked if this could be modified. Zeller said yes. He stated the program is restrictive, in a way, if the City can get money from other programs where the City would be eligible for \$50,000 and somebody would be eligible for \$5,000 from the City, they would be precluded from another program taking \$50,000. Zeller said he wants to make sure it is in the best interest of the people seeking the funds, in mind. He said HUD is working on this and possibly will change the rule. Zeller said he has not gotten a definitive answer on this yet. Perry said there is also a business loan program. He said the City can also use this, also.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES ON 1<sup>st</sup> READING**

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

**Ordinance 2020-13**                      Amending Ordinance 2013-8, Defining and Prohibiting Sound/Noise Disturbance and Providing Penalties for Violations (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Colombo.

**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 2020-13** Amending Ordinance 2013-8, Defining and Prohibiting Sound/Noise Disturbance and Providing Penalties for Violations (**3<sup>rd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2020-14** Approving the Agreement and Participation of the Police Department of the City of Hazleton with the Luzerne County Drug Task Force (LCDTF), Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Attorney General and Luzerne County District Attorney's Office (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Sacco.

**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 2020-14** Approving the Agreement and Participation of the Police Department of the City of Hazleton with the Luzerne County Drug Task Force (LCDTF), Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Attorney General and Luzerne County District Attorney's Office (**3<sup>rd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2020-15** Approving the Agreement and Participation of the Police Department of the City of Hazleton with the Luzerne County Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Task Force and Luzerne County District Attorney's Office (**2<sup>nd</sup> READING**)

Presented by Sacco. Seconded by Colombo.

**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 2020-15** Approving the Agreement and Participation of the Police Department of the City of Hazleton with the Luzerne County Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Task Force and Luzerne County District Attorney's Office  
**(3<sup>rd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinance 2020-16** Amending Ordinance 2004-33 (as Amended by Ordinance 2005-26 and 2006-1), Certificate of Use and Occupancy **(2<sup>nd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

**On the Question:**

Perry asked Mayor Cusat how many code officers are full and part-time in the Code Office. Mayor Cusat stated one of the part-time officers has been moved to full-time and the other part-time officer is still part time. He said there are four full-time officers, and one part-time officer. Perry also asked about the number of inspections. Mayor Cusat said the code office is still doing virtual inspections.

**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 2020-16** Amending Ordinance 2004-33 (as Amended by Ordinance 2005-26 and 2006-1), Certificate of Use and Occupancy **(3<sup>rd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Ordinances 2020-17** Public Monuments **(2<sup>nd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Sacco. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Perry said personally, we all want the rule of law and not any other rule. He said we do not need polarization, we need unity. He said he believes in one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all. He feels this is as fair as we can be with this ordinance. He said he will be voting for it.

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

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

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**Ordinances 2020-17**

**Public Monuments (3<sup>rd</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution 2020-49**

Resolution Certifying the Local Match for State Operating Financial Assistance for Fiscal Year 2020/2021

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Sacco.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-50**

Rescinding Resolution 2018-55- Designating Funds

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Sacco.

**On the Question:**

Barletta asked what exactly "is this one". Zeller stated this is the RAC-P loan given to Downtown Hazleton from the state. He said there is approximately \$135,000 the City must put in there until the funds are made available. He stated the City would need to take it from the general fund or wherever. Zeller said he is taking it from one of a development accounts that is in the Community Development office. He said as soon as the funds come in the funds will be paid back. Zeller stated there is a consultant on the process, for RAC-P, that required additional information that was contained in the original resolution and needed additional language. Zeller said this is why the first one needs to be repealed and do another one.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-51**

Resolution Designating Funds For Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) Downtown Hazleton Revitalization Project- PHASE 4

Presented by Sacco. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Atty. Logsdon stated this is like the resolution that was repealed-2018-55, RAC-P grant. He said it adds the additional language that the grant program requires. He said they wanted this in the resolution and the old one was repealed. He said this is the new one with all the language in it. Atty. Logsdon said it is the same project with the same funds. Perry said it is just repurposing the name change.

**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.

**Comments from the Audience:** Maria Jacketti, 549 Kiefer Ave., Hazleton, said she posted her questions on ZOOM and would like them answered. She asked why are we doing this. Jacketti asked what consideration, do we have, for the descendants of the Taino survivors who make up about 70% of our City's population. She said rule of law was mentioned. She said she does not think this is illegal. Jacketti stated "she dipped her toes" at NYU law school but did not complete her law degree. She said it "stinks of illegality" to her. She said, "we voted for you or we did not vote for you". She said this is not the old Soviet Union. Jacketti said she demands answers, especially from the two Democrats. She said the Democrats have the most to explain. She said they will all be gone in the next election. Jacketti stated this little "cabal" is not going to last. She said the demographics have changed and the population has changed. She said there are two colleges downtown with this is more of an educated City. Jacketti said Telemundo, NBC news and International News will be here next. She said she was interviewed by Turkish National TV one year ago. She said the whole world is watching Hazleton. She said Hazleton is the most written about small city in America. Jacketti said this is due to Barletta's uncle "starting the fire". She said they do not answer questions. She asked Jim Dino, Standard Speaker reporter, why he does not ask questions. Jacketti said to answer the questions and no one is answering them.

Annie Mendez, 1075 N. James Street, Hazleton, said she wants city council members to remember this day. She said if they did not learn, anything, from the ordinance in 2005 & 2006 that "Uncle Lou" enacted

and Mundie along with other members of city council, at that time, passed. Mendez said if history does not teach you that “wrong is not right”, you will learn the hard way. Mendez stated it is unfortunate the taxpayer will have to cover the bill. She stated Lou Barletta left the City “one some million dollars “bankrupt. She said they need to think of the people they are serving. Mendez stated they do not know a thing about Christopher Columbus, otherwise, they would be embarrassed and ashamed of the atrocities that he committed and move the statue. She said with the Black Lives movement, the people of different races and colors are fighting for their rights. She said she and people of colored skin also need to fight for equality and justice. She said this proved the small minds of Hazleton City and government. Mendez said to look around the world and country and not to look at the small community we live in. She said this will not stop and they are “lighting a fire”. She said it is shameful and appalling to make this decision. She said shame on “all of you”. Mendez said this is now the time to know what is to be done the right way. Mendez stated, “I will see you in court”.

Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, said he listened to all this about history and legalities. He said everyone is saying we should not live in the past. Rabo stated he agrees with this. He said 2020 is not 2006. He said with this ordinance, there is a process. He said no one’s rights are being taken away. Rabo stated he does not know what these extremists are talking about. He said he learned something new at this meeting and learns something from every meeting. Rabo stated he is a son of immigrants, mother from Czechoslovakia and father from Jordan. He said there are Roman artifacts and statues all over these countries. He said we all know what the Roman Empire did to the Middle East and Eastern Europe. He asked if it is fair for Jordan and Czechoslovakia to tear down the Roman monuments, including Petra Jordan which is considered one of the wonders in the world and embedded in the cliff. Rabo said this is “mind boggling” to him. He said the rest of the world is not clamoring to tear down every single statue of persecution that has ever been. He said they have every right to tear them down, but not looking to tear them down. Rabo said they are reminders of the past, but do not idolize them. He said they keep them as people remembering what the past was and to avoid these situations in the future. He stated this is what needs to be remembered about statues that people like or do not like. Rabo stated all art is subjective and not engrained in “gospel truth”. He said it is what you take from it,” the good, bad and ugly.”

Rabo also asked how many requests, were made, for converted properties, for zoning, either through the zoning officer or the zoning board. He said this question was never answered. He said, as far as history goes, he hopes any person or press, from the outside, would ask questions about the ordinance and statue. He said this is a great conversation to have. He stated threats are unwarranted here. Rabo said every group that has come here, i.e.- Italian, Irish or Latino’s, is about building and not tearing down.

Mary Rapach, 847 E. Lackawanna Street, Olyphant, PA, said she does understand what Rabo said in building bridges. She said Rabo stated radicals are trying to tear things down. Rapach said, in reality, Hazleton has been given an opportunity, with this ordinance, and unfortunately, has ignored it. She said the focus, on Columbus, is entirely because the Italian American community was vilified. She said the rest of the white people, at the time, were willing to listen to. She said as Jacketti mentioned, it was unfortunate that the ordinance had bankrupted the City and put a “black mark” on the City and Hazleton could have moved forward. Rapach stated she and others will work with the Dominican community. She said she and others with “lily-white skin”, are able to walk anywhere, in Hazleton, without fear, and need to stand up and acknowledge that Hazleton can do better. She said this is heartbreaking.

Jason Carr, Saylorsburg, PA, asked Mayor Cusat if he purchased properties, that he owns, in the City of Hazleton, received any special favors, from Northeast Revenue, when purchased at a tax sale.

Mayor Cusat said he never purchased properties at a tax sale.

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat thanked everyone who came to the Fourth of July celebration over the weekend. He said it was the best attended event that the City has had in many years. He said not to say there were people on “the premises” with thousands of cars throughout the City. He stated there were people from all over Northeast part of PA watching from their vehicles and came and got food

from the food trucks, left, with parking “blocks away”. He also thanked all in the City with the recent COVID-19 situation and coming together. He said everyone did what they needed to do and are in recession. Mayor Cusat said there has not been a double-digit gain in over a month. He said the curve has been flattened. He said other parts of the state and country that has not taken it seriously are suffering now. Mayor Cusat said he thanked everyone for protecting all the monuments in the City. He said, somehow, it became part of Christopher Columbus. He said it had nothing to do with one statue but every piece of history that has been, in place, for over 20 years. He said that means pictures in City Hall, war memorials, and all the other stuff. He said it has nothing to do with one particular statue.

**Comments from City Administrator:** Lynch stated the City is still at a point, in the year, where the City is not seeing an impact from COVID-19 and the layoffs the people experienced where the City still has an EIT figure that is, mainly, in line, where the City was in 2019. Lynch stated it is down 1%. He stated real estate taxes are about the same with a reduction of 0.7%. He said delinquent tax collection is up from last year. Lynch said licenses and permits is down, slightly, at \$35,000. Lynch stated parking meter fines is down, considerably, but parking meter revenue is up considerably. He is thinking some of the revenue was classified as fines. He said he will research this for the council and get a more accurate count. He said public safety is up by \$139,000. Lynch said highways and streets is up by \$54,000. He said miscellaneous revenue is up by \$300,000 from this point last year. He said, overall, revenues are roughly the same, as in 2019, right now. Lynch said the City anticipates seeing the EIT start to fall off a little getting farther into the summer because it comes in “behind” and are not “real time.” Lynch said expenses, across the board, are “pretty much” down from this point last year. He said it is a general “slow down” in purchasing and things the City does. He said there is about \$900,000 less, in expenses, than in 2019. He said this included the City healthcare payment made for June. Lynch said this is one of the City’s biggest expenses. He said, right now, the City is holding steady and he continues to monitor everything. Lynch stated he is anticipating being tight at the end of the year with lost revenue. He said, hopefully, there will be revenue replacement, for the City, through different measures. Lynch said he wanted to “echo” what Mayor Cusat said in regard to the ordinance. He said the ordinance, itself, is a mechanism for people to address anything in the City but became about one statue. He said this is debatable. He said it gives the people the authority. Lynch stated the mechanism can be questioned but does not mean council cannot entertain an amendment later. He said it gives the people the opportunity to represent them. He said it is a good thing given some of the things that are going on in the country.

Perry asked Lynch if expenses are down and by how much. Lynch said he needs to do a little “more digging” and verify but expenses are down about \$900,000. He said he is questioning some things and needs to check them. Perry said this is good news for now. Barletta asked if business licenses are down \$35,000. Lynch stated licenses and permits, in general, across the board. Lynch said the City keeps getting less and less in cable TV franchise fees and is lowering every year. Lynch said the City received \$112,00 and is budgeted for \$130,000. He said this is for the whole class of licenses and permits. He said business privilege tax is down, from 2019, to \$150,000, but does not mean it would not “pick up” later. He said it is a “point in time” comparison.

**Comments from Council:** Mundie said with the noise ordinance, just passed, he has received a lot of people complaining, on Diamond Ave., for fireworks on the Fourth of July. He said if there are any more fireworks, now, he is hoping police officers are giving out tickets, where they should be, and not just warnings, especially with passing the ordinance. He said city council can keep up with this with receiving reports on this with how many tickets are given out, for noise, in the next couple of weeks.

Mayor Cusat said the City does not give out warnings for fireworks. He said if they are caught, they received a citation and any other fireworks were impounded or confiscated. He said there were no

warnings given. He said the problem is catching them “in the act” in putting the “match to the fuse” and makes it very difficult to enforce. Mayor Cusat said there were over 800 calls over the weekend and will have a breakdown shortly. He said there were 64 citations and a few arrests. He said there was a lot going on, over the long weekend, with the holiday.

Mundie said he knows the police are doing a great job. He said he received a lot of complaints, from people on West Diamond Ave., with fireworks and music. Mundie said he knows the police are busy, but the City needs to keep up with some report on how many noise complaints and how many tickets were given out. He said the City should be on “top of this”.

Mayor Cusat said it has been in the newspaper for about four to five weeks now. Mundie said some people think this is trivial because it is noise. He said if someone is next to it, night after night, this is a problem. He said his friend, Joe Joyce, has moved out of town, a while ago, who lived in the Heights, but called about a noise problem but nothing was done. He said Joyce then bought a home outside the City. Mayor Cusat said the officers respond and handle the situations as best they can.

Brian Schoonmaker, Hazleton Police Chief, said the police officers handled over 813 calls for service this weekend. He said 430 were for fireworks and/or noise complaints done with four officers and some supervisors, on their own time, trying to help. Mundie said he knows it is overwhelming and his guys do a great job. Schoonmaker said it has been extremely “taxing” on all the officers, including police officers out with COVID-19 and other family issues at this point.

Barletta said it has been nice seeing the police officers in the newspaper. Schoonmaker stated his officers cited over 60 individuals, this weekend, and is limited and will not be listing all the names and addresses this time. He said it is a little “too much”.

Barletta asked Pedri when city council calls in code complaints if these are included in the code complaint list that is emailed to city council. Pedri said he has one employee, in his office, who does all the code complaints and he does the assignments. He said he gives it to her and she puts it on the Excel sheet. Barletta said she made a few complaints, of residents, and are not on the list. Pedri stated he, sometimes, does not list where the origin is from. He said most are on there but will check into this. He said a lot of issues, he handles, does not make the list, as a zoning issue versus a code issue. Barletta said she has a lot of residents calling her and keeps a list but not are not making the code complaints. She said then they call city council members. Pedri said there are two means of getting something to the code department, either calling the office or filing a complaint. He said they can call him on his extension number at City Hall (4980) number or can call the office. He also said there is a complaint form on the website to file. He said all these things are taken care of. He said, very rarely, is there a situation that is not taken care of. Pedri stated the procedure, for high grass, is a warning is sent to the resident with 10 days given to cut the grass. He said then a notice of violation (NOV) is sent and addition to this is put on a City list and given to the DPW. He said once or twice a week, the DPW will then go and cut the grass, in addition to all their other duties. Pedri said when it gets to a certain point then a lien will be put on the property. He said a resident state that they called about high grass, three weeks ago, but tells them it needs to go through the procedure. Barletta asked Pedri to email her, tomorrow, because there are three code complaints that there is nothing done about. She said Pedri does not have to answer these tonight. Pedri concurred. Pedri also said in response to Mr. Rabo, he will get the number of inspections and people adding apartments, onto properties, that went to the zoning board or if he handled them. He stated he will get this information, to council, and will have this for the next meeting.

Mundie asked how the Northeast Field is going “down there” if it is getting straighten out. Mayor Cusat said he means Pagnotti Field. Pedri said as far as he knows, the police department is handling this. He stated there were several issues of unlicensed cars over there. Pedri stated these were taken care of. He said there is a problem, currently, with VIN numbers on cars and getting information from PENN DOT and even working with the police department. He said code handles cars on private property, and the police department handles cars on the streets. He said he is behind, currently, due to getting VIN# information to adequately complete the procedure. He said his office did remove some cars over there and is working

on this. He said, from a police perspective, they are handling the day-to-day operations. He said code is also working on the trash issues there.

Perry said there was a question on 601 Poplar Street and subletting cars. Pedri said he has spoken to a new manager last week. He said they are in the process to terminate their arrangement with the person there now. He stated this person is under the direction of the prior manager that was there. He said the owner knew nothing about it. Pedri stated the person has a lot of trucks parked and junk vehicles in the back. He is working with the new owner to do this along with new management. Perry asked if they are going to change oil there. Barletta said there are two businesses there. Barletta asked when they are going to clean this up. Pedri said, hopefully, within the next month. Barletta asked if they can be given a shorter deadline because it makes the City look horrible. Pedri said they should have never been there. Barletta said the City has already talked to them twice. Pedri said he is trying to get them out completely. Pedri said this is what the owner is trying to do with terminating any agreement there was in the past. He said the problem is it is still the same owner but different manager. Pedri stated they are doing a significant amount of work on the building with a new roof and a lot of mold that was taken care of. He said he is working with them for occupancy permits.

Colombo stated Pagnotti Field needs to be addressed. He said, come Sunday, councilwomen Sacco and Barletta had to clean up the field. He said it is bad. Colombo said Fire Chief Leshko stated we are fortunate nothing was burned down. He said it was like a war zone with smoke everywhere. He said, hopefully, something can happen with this.

Colombo commended Police Chief Schoonmaker in doing a fabulous job, last Monday, with the incident that went on in the City. He said all officers, federal, state or City police, did a very good operation with all the residents kept safe. He said everyone went home safe and thanked all.

He also said the Fourth of July event, at City View Park, was a great event for the City after people being "cooped" up. He commended Mayor Cusat and all who participated.

Sacco said based off the different moments seen going through the **(inaudible)**, sometimes "stepping up to the plate" and being on council, certain things come across that you need to sit down, scratch your head and dig deep "in your gut" with many people offended tonight. She said it is not directed at one particular statue but directed to the City, as a whole. Sacco said this City is a melting pot, has grown up being a melting pot, and continues to be a melting pot. She stated city council, personally, stands behind and respects every citizen and takes, into consideration, for all, and does not look at a mainstream color. She said **(inaudible)**. Sacco thanked everyone for their participation and stepping up "to the plate" and voicing their opinion. She looks forward for the City staying on the right path **(inaudible)**. Sacco said there was a very good event for the Fourth of July with Mayor Cusat putting on an awesome thing "up there". She said it is nice to see some light "breathing back through the veins" of Hazleton. She said it is a great community and an honor to serve the community where we live. She said there is a lot to be thankful for and much potential ahead of us. She said there is a great council standing behind you and supporting you.

Perry commended the Fourth of July fireworks. He stated they have been the best the City has ever had. He also thanked everyone who came and spoke today. He said it is a democracy and all are here to give a voice. He said ordinances are nothing more than a rule that is a process so people can speak their mind. Perry said there is a process to get things done in the City. He said the City is the most diverse community. He stated the City is a pillar; a lot of people are here and are coming. He said people and businesses are moving in. He said this is great for the community. Perry said city council is trying to

enforce some of the rules of things. He said he encourages people to be here and speak their minds. Perry stated this is why there is rule of law and not mob rule. Perry said this why there are no big problems in the City. He said even though we are diverse, we get along with a great community here who participate and help out. Perry said it is something to be proud of. Perry thanked all for commenting today with the majority not living in the City. He said they give everyone an opportunity, not only the City residents, but also those who do not live in the City. He said this is our City ordinance and if the majority wants to do something about it, they can. Perry said this is what democracy is all about.

Perry commended Mayor Cusat and both chiefs with the astronomical number of fireworks. He thanked the police chief and officers for doing a great job in these difficult situations.

**Comments from Junior Council:** None.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.