

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2020**

Council met for a WORK SESSION on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The WORK SESSION began at 6:47 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 Mayor Jeff Cusat, Atty. Sean Logsdon, Dan Lynch, Fire Chief Donald Leshko, Frank Vito, and Police Chief Brian Schoonmaker. Also, in attendance was Gerald Cross- Pennsylvania Economy League representatives.

Perry said Frank Vito, Department of Public Works Director, will be presenting his draft budget for 2021.

Vito said everyone knows his original budget of \$1,700,000 for the DPW salaries and most of the expenses come out of the liquid fuels account. He said his "wish list" is: He would like an additional 2-4 more workers and this would increase his budget by \$250,000, roughly \$60,000/per worker with benefits. Vito stated \$100,000 for repairing inlets. He said his department repairs about 50/year at \$2,000 an inlet. He said this is why there is talk about a stormwater fee or something. He said there is nothing, in his budget, that allows the DPW to repair the inlets the way they are being repaired. Vito said he is taking the money out of their liquid fuels line item. He said the DPW has always had money for line painting in the budget, about \$25,000/year. He said the City has not been painting lines, professionally, in the City, for about 15 years. Vito said this should be done through all the major intersections. He stated a lot of playgrounds are in need of mulching and of swing repairs and this is something Zeller should discuss. Vito said there should be a budget of \$10-\$15,000/yr. He said there has not been any mulch put around the swing sets for the last five years. Vito said this needs to be done in 2021. He stated his biggest item is the City needs to repair the roads. He is asking how the City could do this with maybe about \$500,000 implemented in a paving plan. Vito said \$200,000-\$300,000 does not "do it". He said by the time the City is done with the state's regulations in putting in curb and handicapped ramps, it cuts the paving in half. Vito said this is what he is looking at. He said it does not sound "like much" but it is about an extra \$1,000,000/yr.

Perry asked if DPW employees could paint lines or do they need equipment to paint lines. Vito stated his employees have been painting lines downtown and sections on 15th Street, with the arrows, and are being done "in-house". He said the double-yellow markings cannot be done by DPW. He said this is done through Interstate Road Markings. Perry asked Vito if he needs money to "budget-out". Vito said yes. He said his workers do the smaller jobs, but the budget is small, and the money comes out of his materials budget. Mayor Cusat said the City has a hand-held machine. He said the work that needs to be done could only be done by a truck. Perry said the City does not have money in the budget for paving. He stated the money comes out of the liquid fuels account. He said there is no line item that Vito could use for paving. Mayor Cusat said the City will "be done" about \$80,000 in the liquid fuels account in 2021. He said this was also discussed at our PEL meetings.

Lynch said as city council recalls talking about, for year 2021, budgeting road repairs and reviewing numbers, with the City engineers, and "back of the napkin" type-stuff, the optimal amount would be \$2,000,000. He said the City has been budgeting, for road paving and repairs, about \$230,000. He said this is a little more than 10% of what the optimal funding would be for the roads. He does not know, in the past, if there was a capital account. He said only about 10% has been committed, in the budget, to this, in the past seven years. Mayor Cusat said there is 114 miles of road in the City of Hazleton. He stated the City is responsible for 98 miles. He said it is about \$250,000 a mile, currently, to do the milling and overlay. He said to do Alter and Vine Streets, 14 blocks total, the cost will be about \$125,000. He said a mile is about 25 blocks. Mayor Cusat said it is about \$250,000 to do a mile and this is just milling and

overlay. He said this does not include curb ramps or stormwater inlet. He stated all the City side streets are deteriorating. Perry asked if there is money for the City's alleys. Mayor Cusat stated alleys are non-existent. He said 1st through 22nd Streets need to be repaired. He said the alleys get a thin overlay on them. He said the City needs to come up with a plan, "sooner or later". He said everything is crumbling. He said it has been a long time since major paving has been done. Perry said this is in addition to the \$3,000,000 the City is spending on paving. Mayor Cusat stated the \$3,000,000 is being used for major thoroughfares. He said the UGI agreement is a big help with a couple "hundred thousand a year". He said the City is still not where they should be. He said the bid that was read today was for \$1,000,000 for the 5-6 streets in the City. He said this is maybe about four miles. He said this will take a large chunk of the City's Community Development money each year. Lynch said the PIB loan will commit about \$180,000 of liquid fuels money, towards the loan, each year. He stated if the City left it alone, the amount of available funding for street repairs and materials, would be about \$80,000. Mayor Cusat said this would only include pothole patching only. Perry asked Lynch if Ryan Hottenstein will be talking to city council regarding the City's refinancing issue. Lynch said absolutely. Perry said there are big chunks of money needed for either inlets or MACK trucks for the City. He stated the "DPW people" are always considered last. Lynch said for bonds, the City would need to think of long-term things and capital items. He said not so much roads because this would be a 7-year plan. Perry said like trucks and vehicles. Lynch agreed. He said roads would not be viewed "well".

Mayor Cusat said Pedri had to get "off the ZOOM call" and will not be presenting his 2021 draft budget. The city clerk forwarded the e-mail, of Pedri's draft budget, to all city council members, from August 21, 2020. Lynch said he received Pedri's memorandum. Mayor Cusat said Pedri gave everyone an outline.

Lynch said the memo has three major items. His first is an increase in the income from Uniform Commercial Code Inspection with hiring of full time UCC inspector rather than a 3rd party inspector. Lynch said the City would receive an increase in revenue on the "revenue side" from this. Perry stated the City has this right now. Barletta asked, currently, who the UCC inspector is for the City. Mayor Cusat said Tino Nocchi. She asked if Pedri is also an inspector. Mayor Cusat said no; this is for the licensed. He said Pedri is a BCO. Lynch said the Code Department's present staff of code inspectors consists of four full-time and one part-time. Pedri would like to increase to five full-time, possibly Code/Health and one additional part-time employee. Pedri would like one full-time Code/Health officer. Lynch said Pedri would like a staff that consists of staff doing all Code and Health issues. Perry asked if there is money, in the budget, for a health officer. Lynch said the City could get a Health Officer through one of the CARES grants. Barletta stated looking through the payroll reports, there are 9 employees listed in the Code Office. Mayor Cusat said there are 2 code clerks, Pedri, four-full time and one part-time employees. He said he does not know who the other employee is. Lynch asked if Tino is included in the Code Department. Mayor Cusat said Tino is not an officer, he is an inspector. Barletta said his wages would still come out of this budget. Lynch said Tino would be under this class. Lynch said for the Code Department Equipment, Pedri needs additional cars. Pedri has two of the fire chief's old vehicles, one police car and one additional vehicle. His proposal would be to get two additional used vehicles, one being a pick-up truck and may receive an additional vehicle from HTA by the end of the year. Lynch said the City has been talking with Enterprise to see how these progress if the program expands. He said if Pedri is using the used cars, it is not a huge amount. Pedri also needs two additional tablets to coordinate the GIS Traisr system on remote sites, additional personal protective clothing, replace and update printer for clerks' desk, new chair for clerk and additional desk. Lynch said most of the stuff, at the end, will fall under normal budgeting for office supplies. Perry asked if the Code Department has "identifying features" when they go out. Mayor Cusat said the City wants to improve on this. He said, currently, they have vests and ID cards. Barletta asked if everyone has an ID card. She said city council received an email, about 1 ½ year ago, about the ID cards. Mayor Cusat said he does not know where they left off on this. He stated the ID maker is in the police department and making them as needed. Barletta asked if they wear shirts with wording on them. Mayor Cusat said they wear safety green vests. He said he has been talking about getting safety green winter vests in 2020. Barletta asked if there are two tablets, currently, for the GIS system. Mayor Cusat said they need two more tablets because there is

a total of four full-time code officers. Barletta asked if the GIS system enables them to print out a report at a scene or take pictures. Mayor Cusat said it allows them to take pictures, but they cannot print out. He said he has been talking about putting the printers in the cars but has not gotten that far because of the vehicles the City had. He stated there are printers to put in the back of the cars and "hardwire" them in. Sacco asked if the officers print out the report, at the scene, would the employees have to come back to the office to fill out all the paperwork. Mayor Cusat said a lot of employees are entering information into the GIS system from the field. Perry said city council gets the monthly report of who called but does not have a report of what happened and how it was resolved. He said they just want to help the employees become more efficient. Barletta said city council members do not know the outcome and are told to do a right-to-know request if they want to know the outcome. She asked Atty. Logsdon if this is true. Mundie agreed and said he does not think city council would need to do a right-to-know request. Barletta said code is one of the biggest issues and city council can see that. She said they are trying to help but are being pushed to the "back burner" and not knowing how to help the department succeed. She said getting two more tablets may not help if there is no communication. She said they are not seeing the progress or outcome. Atty. Logsdon said this is the first time he is hearing this. He said he will look into this and see what is going on in the code department. Barletta said she will forward the emails, she received, from the code department, to Sean. Perry stated everyone could see what they do, and it is public information. He said he can just look this up and what properties have gotten permits. He said there should be a way to do it on the tablets or somewhere they can see it. Sacco asked if parking and code issues could be seen on the GIS system. Mayor Cusat said parking is not on the GIS system. He said the GIS system is a global mapping system. He stated it would show you where all the handicapped signs are. He said there are several different "layers" and the City pays a different licensing fee for them. He said the City can "plot" different inventories for handicapped and business signs, and fire hydrants. He said, currently, the City is doing permits and licenses on the system. He said the City, currently, does not have all the "layers". Barletta asked if this is the right system for code and does he see any progress. Mayor Cusat stated this is the right system, but they need to catch up and getting everything entered. He said they need help entering all the information. Mayor Cusat stated they need more clerks and every officer needs their own clerk. He said the officers are going out to investigate, coming back and doing the paperwork. He said there is too much paperwork. Mayor Cusat said there is a two-month process, for a high grass complaint, before going to court. He said if a resident calls in a grass complaint, the City needs to fill out the paperwork, inspect, come back and notify the person, and give them time. He said then send out a certified letter and a regular letter. He said then the City needs to give the resident the time to rectify the problem. Mayor Cusat said if the resident does not rectify the problem, the City needs to go and inspect to make sure it was not rectified. He said then the City needs to send the letter to the magistrate's office. He said it is a total of 60 days for a high grass complaint. He said then they get the letter in the mail to cut the grass, cut the grass, show the letter to the judge, and start the process all over again. Barletta said there are different computer systems where the code office could print the citation right at the scene. She said she sent this information out to Pedri and Mayor Cusat about one or two years ago. She said then they would not have to do the "double work". Mayor Cusat said if the City buys all of the overlays, the employee could do this in the current system. Barletta said this would cut down on traveling, salaries, and benefits. Mayor Cusat said the City needs the Quality of Life tickets back. He said the problem with the Quality of Life tickets was working with the magistrate a few years ago and he lost a lot of notes after giving them to the clerk to consolidate them and they "disappeared". He said the City needs to sit down with him again. Mayor Cusat said the judge is saying there is no "due process". He stated a lot of the issues that are going to the magistrate are being thrown out because the Quality of Life does not give it the due process on some issues. He said the officer comes back to City Hall to do the paperwork and then has look through the book to see what citation needs to be given. He said if they could sit down with the magistrate for a few hours to discuss this. Barletta asked if he has tried to reach out to the magistrate. Mayor Cusat said Atty. Logsdon is trying to reach out to him, over a year, but has not gotten "locked up". She said this is what the City needs to focus on. Mayor Cusat said the Quality of Life tickets would solve a "ton of problems". Perry said Atty. Logsdon is going to "reach out" to see if this could happen. Mayor Cusat stated the City of Wilke-Barre is done with the Quality of Life tickets but their magistrate is enforcing them where the City's magistrate is

saying they violate their due process. He said the City needs the ordinance to reflect what the magistrate will enforce. Barletta asked Atty. Logsdon to work on this as Wilkes-Barre does. Sacco asked if the fire and DPW departments are allowed to write Quality of Life tickets. Mayor Cusat stated this would be up to the ordinance. He said when he was on city council and wrote the parking ordinances, he allowed all non-elected employee, of the City, to enforce all the parking issues. He said this allows fire, police and DPW employees to issue all parking tickets if they have the NPO number from the judge. Mayor Cusat asked if the city council members want to sit down and work on the Quality of Life Ordinance. Barletta said she agrees. Sacco stated they need to set up a date before adjourning. Mayor Cusat said they need to set up a separate WORK SESSION, spend about 3-4 hours to do it, and finish it up. He said they will all send out some dates to get together. Perry said it should be between council meetings. Mayor Cusat said the meeting could be anytime, during the afternoon or on the weekend. Barletta asked if Wilkes-Barre has everything linked together. Mayor Cusat said all the issues are in the same ordinance. He said the old tickets are in City Hall. Perry said they could start with these. Sacco said she is good friends with Paul McDermott from the Penn State University Business Program. She said two students "reached out to her" to do an internship. She said they may work as a clerk or worker to type or "do things". Mayor Cusat said he has had no luck with interns, but if they are "hand-picked" the interns, maybe, will give the City quality workers who are willing to learn the job. Sacco asked if this gives them "wiggle room" for a part-time clerk. Mayor Cusat said there is still a couple dollars left over in the budget to put towards a part-time employee. Barletta asked if, currently, the code department has two clerks. Mayor Cusat stated there are two clerks, one full-time and one part-time. Barletta stated the City of Easton has two part-time employees and it works out well for them. Mayor Cusat said the City's clerks also do rental registrations and permits. He said he does not know what Easton's clerks do compared to what our clerks do. He said back in the old days, one person did just rental registrations and one did just business licenses. He said the engineers also had their own clerks. He said it is tough to compare municipalities without knowing how their departments are structured. Perry said they will work on the date and time.

Mayor Cusat spoke of the Parking Enforcement budget. He said the City wants to put a set of gates on the northside lot on Wyoming Street, between Green and Spruce Streets. He said there used to be a parking gate on there. He wants to put a parking gate there and re-pave the parking lot. Mayor Cusat said it was almost filled before the coronavirus pandemic. He said he would like to do some "touch ups" to the paving. He said these are the two things he wants to put in the parking budget. Barletta asked if they just got old. Mayor Cusat stated the gate stopped working and it was not worth paying the lady "in the back". He said he installed a gate on the Chestnut Street lot and a gate on the parking garage. Barletta asked where the money came in for these items. Mayor Cusat said he used refurbished parts for the Chestnut Street lot and did not cost too much. He said the City was renting out more spaces there for some extra revenue. He said at the parking garage, DHD was doing work in there and the City gave them a discount on 60 spaces they rent from the City. He said this benefits everyone.

Perry spoke of the Land Bank issue. Perry stated Sam Galski, Standard Speaker reporter, has done a story on this. He said the issues are the Blighted Property Committee, the Redevelopment Authority, which are not functioning right now, and the City "has this". He asked if Chris Goolata should come in to talk to city council and administration ahead of time. He asked Lynch if he still has contacts with Mr. Goolata. Lynch said yes. Perry asked Lynch if he could ask Goolata to speak at the next council meeting. Lynch agreed. Perry said the meetings will still be ZOOM meetings and that he would not have to come "all the way in". He said they need an expert on the "whole thing". Perry said Mayor Cusat stated there is enough money in demolition to start this. Mayor Cusat said he feels there is enough money to get the "ball rolling". He said if the ordinance is not passed, there is no purpose to go through the process of moving funds around and getting the Blighted Property Committee and Vacant Committee together. He said he would like to see this ordinance get passed and move forward. He said he knows some people "beg to differ". Perry asked how the Blighted Committee would work together with the Land Bank. Mayor Cusat said they "co-mingle". He stated the Blighted Committee would tell the City there is a definite blighted property. He stated the way he wants the Land Bank to work is the City would know

what properties need to come down that were involved in a fire and are unlivable. He said if his fire chief or building inspector tells him that the buildings are unsafe, then the City pays takes them down, but the owner is retaining ownership. He said the City is doing all the work, paying for it, putting a lien on the property, and the City never sees the money for it. Perry asked if there is a list of all these properties. Mayor Cusat said yes. He said the outcome, in the end, is the City would get some money back. He said the way he wants to run the Land Bank may not be a traditional way to take possession of the property and then look for an investor down the line. Perry stated a resident may want to donate a property. Mayor Cusat said there is a property on South Cedar Street where the person died, and the brother does not want to have anything to do with it. He said the body was in there for days and smelled. He said the neighbor wants it, but the brother does not want to go through the problem. He said now the neighbor will have to sit there with a vacant property. Perry said Chris needs to speak to city council, ask questions, put it on the agenda and then they can make a decision. Mundie said he believes a Land Bank could help the City, but it will take a lot of money and work. He said he spoke to Joe Chalk for about 45 minutes. Mundie said Chalk will send him their bylaws and budget. Mundie said they were the fourth one in the state of Pennsylvania and there is a total of 18 Land Banks in PA since they passed a law. He stated Chalk started with an LSA grant of \$250,000 and used up all the money. He said they have \$40,000 in the bank with 20-30 properties and are selling four of them. He stated Chalk said it took a long time before it got going. There are five municipalities: Pittston, West Pittston, Duryea, Jenkins Township, and he cannot remember the other one. He said they each "throw in" \$1,500/yr. towards the budget that pays for the insurance. He said the Executive Director is Joe Chalk but does not get paid. He stated Chalk gets paid from the Pittston Redevelopment Authority. He said their lawyer is also the lawyer for their City. He said they do "pro-bono", and "throw them money" now and then. Mundie said when the work has to be done, in each municipality's property, the City does the work. He said Mayor Cusat said the City would have to do the work. He asked him what his plan for this is to use the City workers. Mayor Cusat stated the City is already doing all the work and taking care of these properties. He said when the City is demolishing a property, Pedri in the Code Department is going through it with the code officers, turning it over to the code inspector and Sean and then it goes downstairs to the Community Development Office with Zeller, Allison and Karen Parrish. He said the City is still maintaining the property because no one else is. Mundie said he understands what he wants to do with the Land Bank, but it will take some money and resources. He asked Atty. Logsdon to talk to Atty. Karpowich to do some "pro-bono" work with the Land Bank. Atty. Logsdon said he can talk to him. Mundie said this is done in Pittston. He said this needs to be started on a small scale because of money. Mundie stated Chalk was very helpful and nice, but stated it was a lot of work. Barletta stated the Code Department and DPW Department are asking for more workers tonight. She asked how the City will put more work on these workers. She said the City is not in the situation to start this. She said the City cannot even get the roads fixed. Barletta stated she would rather use this money to get the roads fixed. She said there are blighted properties, but the City let the Quality of Life Ordinance go too long. Mayor Cusat said the properties the City is spending a lot of time on are the properties they want to knock down. He said the one property could be sold and were given eight different violations. He stated it is the same properties "over and over". He said if the building is eliminated then the problem is eliminated. He stated the property would be taken down, make it into a lot, sell it, and put the money back into it. He said then it would be put back into the tax rolls. Mayor Cusat said then the City would need to make an agreement with the school district and county to give the Land Bank five years of property taxes for it and these self-funds itself. Barletta said she does not see it working this year with the current Code Department issues not taken care of for six to seven months and no one answering the phone in their department. She said everything needs to be in place before starting this. Barletta stated the City could start small with the Blighted Committee and work up to the Land Bank. She said this cannot be implemented, currently, with the Code Department staff and money. She said the City cannot add to the code and DPW work. Mayor Cusat said it is the same properties over and over again. Mayor Cusat stated the police department also goes to the same properties. He said if the City could handle the situation, at one time, the City would not have to go back to them. Mayor Cusat said a property at Hayes Street and Diamond Ave. has three liens on the property with the grass getting cut about three times a year with the "hedgehog". He said the property will, eventually, come down and with all liens against it with the City seeing no money for it. He

said the Code Department has been there numerous times. He stated the property has been sold and the City needs to wait two years to go back on the tax sale. Mundie said he spoke with Bob Schnee and he may talk to other county commissioners. He said blighted properties are a big problem in the City and in Luzerne County. He said if the Pittston Land Bank could receive \$250,000, then Luzerne County could get \$2,000,000 to tackle the problem. Mayor Cusat said if they get involved with Luzerne County; they always forget about the City. He said anything passed "80" they forget about. Mundie said Luzerne County has two commissioners from the Hazleton, Perry's brother, and Bob Schnee. Mayor Cusat said if the City does it themselves, then they have control. He said half the ordinance just "sits there" and does not do anything. He said if the City does not try, then they will never find out. Mundie asked Perry to bring "in the guy" to talk to council. Lynch stated Goolata knows a lot about this. Perry said Goolata was involved with Northumberland, Monroe, and Westmoreland counties. Mundie asked if Joe Zeller could volunteer to be the Executive Director. Mayor Cusat said Zeller would be on the board and it would come to a vote of the seven people. Mayor Cusat said the board would consist of and the way the ordinance is written is: Two from city council, two from the mayor's office, one from Housing Authority, one from Community Development, and one from the Redevelopment Authority. Perry stated the board would not be taxing the City's workers. He said the City could start a Land Bank with between \$5,000-\$10,000. Perry asked if the demolition money could be used to start. Mayor Cusat said they could make an amendment or fund it with the 2021 Community Development budget, but the ordinance needs to be passed first. Perry asked if an LSA grant would pay. Mayor Cusat said the City has a good chance to get an LSA grant. He said if they do not see any progress, then it is harder to get money.

Perry spoke of the Stormwater Management Ordinance instituted by Alan Wufsus, City Engineer. Mayor Cusat stated Wufsus was not on the ZOOM call. Atty. Logsdon stated Wufsus did not require this ordinance to be on the city council agenda. He said he got it ready and sent it over to the city clerk. He said it is hard to review without Wufsus or Stephanie Milewski from Barry Isett. Perry asked if this requires a stormwater fee. Atty. Logsdon said yes. He said he left in the version the changes from the last time and are highlighted. He stated these are suggested changes and best practice usage. He said Wufsus and Milewski are the best people to discuss this. Atty. Logsdon said Wufsus's timetable would a first reading at the city council meeting agenda on September 22, 2020. He stated, hopefully, Wufsus and Milewski could speak and recommend things at the next meeting and the ordinance being passed at the first city council meeting in October. Mayor Cusat stated the City is, currently, working on inlets with four on Vine Street, four done on 15th Street, and three inlets that need to be fixed tomorrow before paving Laurel Street. He said that is a total of eleven. He said the money is coming out of the general fund or the liquid fuels account. He said the City is then not paving. Mayor Cusat the City is paying for it no matter what. He said if the City is paying for it out of the general fund, it comes down to the taxable property owners. He said if it comes out of the stormwater fee, it is all properties including nonprofits, school district, churches, hospitals, and they will all pay their "fair share". He said it is cheaper for the taxpayer to have a stormwater fee then coming out of the general fund. Barletta asked how the City would come up with a stormwater fee price. Mayor Cusat said there are different ways to do this: square footage, size of parking lots, impervious (*inaudible*). Perry stated this is called the "rain tax". Mayor Cusat there is a current ordinance in effect from 2011. He said the fee is, currently, set at \$0, and \$25.00 per deed. He asked if this should be moved forward or should the City raise regular property taxes. Perry stated this is what Vito is talking about, in his budget, for \$100,000 for inlets.

Sacco asked if the WORK SESSION schedule will be every other meeting. Perry stated the old schedule was every other week. Mayor Cusat said in November, with the timeline for the budget, there is a lot of time to have a couple WORK SESSION meetings. He said he is oaky, before this, to have WORK SESSIONS. She said the meetings should go quicker if the Quality of Life Ordinance is "nailed down". Mayor Cusat said there has been discussion to have the WORK SESSION meeting on a separate day. Colombo said the meeting would go smoother. Atty. Logsdon said they can have the WORK SESSION meetings on a Tuesday or Thursday, before the meeting, and discuss and "kick around" the issues and then create the agenda based on the WORK SESSION meeting outcome. Perry asked for any

suggestions. Sacco stated whatever works for everybody. Perry said they want to have a WORK SESSION on the Quality of Life ordinance. Mayor Cusat said they will send out available dates.

Perry adjourned the WORK SESSION meeting at 7:48 p.m.