

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2021**

Council met for a WORK SESSION on Wednesday, November 10, 2021 in Council Chambers and via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The WORK SESSION began at 6:45 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 Cusat, Atty. Sean Logsdon, Police Chief Brian Schoonmaker, Fire Chief Donald Leshko, and Dan Lynch. Also, present were PEL representatives Gerald Cross, Fred Reddig and Patty Moorhead.

Atty. Sean Logsdon said the payroll preparation tax confirmation was sent to the City Clerk to share with all city council members. He said he must "tweak" the draft. He said it is a little different from some of the other taxing ordinances. Atty. Logsdon said in this scenario, it will be a brand-new ordinance. He said he sent it to council but will send over the new one once it is complete. He said there will be no mercantile tax this year. He said the RFP's for the City tax collector for the payroll preparation tax are ready to go and for the City legal advisor for the payroll preparation tax. He stated it will be advertised three consecutive weeks before council sees it and considers it. He said there will be plenty of time for people to give their feedback on this. Barletta asked if the payroll preparation tax could exceed the mercantile tax amount brought into the City. Atty. Logsdon said it has to be sufficient to cover, at least, the mercantile tax. Mayor Cusat said the initial rate is set at what the mercantile tax was. Atty. Sean Logsdon said, based on the law, the .26% rate that was approved, the City cannot exceed this without court permission. He said this could be reenacted next year. Mundie asked what would happen if someone came in who employs 500 people and the City goes over the amount for the year. Lynch said it could grow. Mundie said the mercantile tax had a \$5,000 exemption, per business and taking off for rentals, and asked if there could be exemptions for small businesses that only have one worker and a small payroll. Mayor Cusat said a payroll of \$5,000 would be a \$13.00 tax saving. Mundie said he knows it is a minimal savings. Mayor Cusat said they will save this for the discussion on that ordinance. Atty. Logsdon said he will look into this. Mundie asked if any other city has a payroll preparation tax minimum. Mayor Cusat said no other municipality, in Pennsylvania, has this with Scranton working on this for the upcoming year. Lynch said there are a lot of small businesses. Mayor Cusat said this may have had to be presented to the court, but they could work on it. Fred Reddig, PEL Representative, said Pittsburgh has enacted the tax, and is the only municipality that has the payroll preparation tax, at this point. He stated Scranton does have it, under consideration, for 2022. Atty. Logsdon said he has Pittsburgh's as a guidance.

Atty. Logsdon said with city council being presented, with the budget, council will change their next meetings from December 8th, 2021 to December 2, 2021 and from December 21, 2021 to December 16, 2021 at 6:00p.m. with the ZOOM option. He stated he sent over some of the advertisements to the City Clerk. He said this gives them enough time for the taxing ordinances to be properly advertised, second and final reading, and, also, gives the mayor time for any vetoes, and time for council to override any vetoes.

Barletta asked about the revenue the City is getting rid of is being replaced with what. Lynch said revenue would be going to debt service, now, with 1.2 mills being re-directed. He stated the overall tax is 6.78 but now, it is 6.38 goes to General Fund. Mundie said there is no money for Federal Seizure Revenue in the budget. Lynch said, since he has been with the City, it was always kept separate and handled separately through the officers. He said he was always got "feedback" it should never be in the budget. Schoonmaker said the money from the Seizure Account is not reflected in the budget. Mundie said there is no money, in the budget, for towing. Mayor Cusat said it is listed under towing contract.

Lynch said it is in the budget, but it did not get the Line Item. He said it is in the budget. Barletta asked about the parking meters. She said the budget states, "year-to-date- \$7,000". Lynch stated when the City opened up the coin account, with FNB Bank, the coin money goes there. Mayor Cusat this would happen when the City would make a transfer.

Mayor Cusat said if city council has any questions, they could meet, within the next 30 days, with two people or less. Lynch stated anyone could call him with questions.

Barletta said the Payroll Contracted Services is \$7,000. She asked if this is new software the City is getting. Lynch stated (*inaudible*). Mayor Cusat said some of the year-to-dates may have been coded wrong. Barletta asked if Engineering Services is being added. She said last year the budget was for \$63,000. Lynch said this is for Alan Wufsus's position and the City will be hiring a replacement, for Wufsus, to train.

Perry asked Mayor Cusat if the City is changing parking meters more "sooner than later". Mayor Cusat said the City will be ordering six kiosks and doing Broad Street first. He said the City is in the process of changing over to Park Mobile. He stated the City's Pango account has been cancelled. Mayor Cusat said it will be the same concept. Perry asked if the City is getting rid of meters. Mayor Cusat stated they will be getting rid of several meters. He said some meters, throughout the City, do not work or are missing. Barletta asked about the two employee buyouts. Perry said this is their lump sum. Mayor Cusat said the City never had this Line item. Perry asked if the City would anticipate a lower parking garage fee because of DBI leaving. Mayor Cusat said he is "assuming" they will get new tenants for these spots. He said the City has an agreement with DHD to rent 50 spots because they get a discount to rent these spots. Barletta asked about the Code Department Enforcement employee salaries. She asked if there are, currently, four full-time and three part-time employees. Lynch said the number, in the budget, should be enough for the department. Mayor Cusat said they will all be getting \$28,000 for this year. Barletta asked about Capital Purchases in the Code Department. She said the Line Item is \$25,000 and year-to-date- \$34,000. She asked what they purchased. Lynch said they purchased parking aids. Barletta asked about the Health Department- Line Item #421. She asked if this is the COVID money. Lynch said, on the revenue side, it is the exact same amount of revenue. She asked if this position was filled. Mayor Cusat said yes. Her name is Whitney. Barletta said this was Diane's position. They stated she is full-time.

Mundie asked if the old company, that owned DBI, if they owe any money for loans on grants. Mayor Cusat said DBI is a construction company. Mundie said the parking part got the grants. Mayor Cusat said that was DHD. He said DHD is still active.

Barletta asked if the Hazleton Fire Department still uses credit cards. Leshko said they "switched over".

Barletta asked if the Solicitor Line-Item increase is because of the union contracts being signed. Mayor Cusat said they are over due to the union contracts. She asked if the City is close to signing the contracts. Mayor Cusat said they need a formal notice, from the unions, that they took a vote on this day, accept his proposal, and then move on to city council. He said most negotiating teams seem very happy with it.

Perry adjourned the WORK SESSION meeting at 7:03 p.m.