

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2021**

Call to Order: Council met in a Special Meeting session on Tuesday, November 23, 2021 in Council Chambers and via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:20 p.m.

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 November 10, 2021 Regular Meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations/Communications: None

Bid Opening: None

Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): None

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

ORDINANCES:

(1ST READING)

BUDGET ORDINANCE 2021-21

An Ordinance Providing for the Appropriation of Specific Amounts Estimated as Required for the Various Departments of the Government of the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania for and during the Fiscal Year, Dating from January 1, 2022 and Ending December 31, 2022 **(1ST READING)**

Presented by Barletta. Seconded by Sacco.

On the Question:

Atty. Sean Logsdon said the reason why they decided to have this meeting is because reading, the “technical” language of the Third-Class City Code, the budget ordinance will be presented to city council, the last meeting in November. He said this is in order to be completely “technical”. Atty. Logsdon stated the budget was presented to council in the WORK SESSION format. He said this meeting is the formal presentation to council as a first reading. He said the second and final reading could be at the December 16th meeting. Atty. Logsdon stated this is to have a formal presentation of the budget ordinance itself to council.

Perry asked Atty. Logsdon if the budget has been presented to the public "at this time." Atty. Logsdon said yes; it has been available to the public since council's last meeting. Barletta stated it is on the City of Hazleton's website, also.

Perry asked about the Buildings and Alterations Line Item on Page 3. He said the year-to-date is listed as \$805.00 but budgeting for \$580.00 for 2022. Lynch said of the \$800,000, more than half is one job. He said with the buildings going up, it is possible to have bigger jobs again. He said they anticipate more work through Tino. He stated this was conservative budgeting.

Perry asked about the Rental Property Registration Line Item. He said it is only \$36,000. He asked why it is so low as there are more renters, than owners, in the City. Lynch said the "currents" are a reflection of early September. He stated as of early September, they brought in more than in 2020. He said there are more personnel, downstairs, and the office is running well. He said it is still a concern with code officers "on the streets". He said \$45,000 is appropriate for what they have seen in 2021. Lynch said the Code Office is still in a transitional period. He stated they brought in new software- MY GOV. Perry asked if the Code Office is using it yet. Lynch said they are using it in some capacity. Perry asked if this is part of the GSI system. Gary Perna said it is all part of the same thing. He said everything will be running through one software system- i.e- Code, Planning, Zoning, and Building Inspection. He said they cannot go to the "next step" without completing the first step in the whole process. He said it has maximized usage in City government.

Perry spoke of the Legal Services for 2022. He said they knew this would be high but should get back to "normal numbers" for next year.

Perry asked for a breakdown for Administration salaries. He said they are "lumped" together. Lynch said in Administration salaries, that does not include Payroll. He stated this is in Data Processing. He said this includes the Assistant City Administrator, Accounts Payable, but not Payroll. Perry said the proposal is much higher and the actual, in 2020, was pretty low. Lynch said the City did not receive money for the grant position in 2020, but this was added.

Perry stated there was a lot of overtime in 2020, not so much in 2021 and estimated in 2022. He asked if this is due to the workload. Perry said they were talking about outsourcing. Lynch said the Administration Office is, currently, down two people. Perry asked if the salaries are still "built in" for these people. Lynch said yes. He said Pat Vaughn, consultant for the City, for years, who works with Accufund and looking where it could be streamlined. Perry asked if these positions will be filled. Lynch said they will replace the "manpower" right away. Lynch said the optimal level of staffing in his department is lower than what he wants it to be. He stated himself "plus four" but outsourcing, for payroll, they should get by with himself "plus three". Perry agreed. He said they need to be efficient and cannot overload workers.

Perry spoke of the Engineering Line Item. Lynch said they want to give as much "lead", as possible, and find a replacement, due to retirement, and spend as much time, with Alan, for training. Perry said the salary increased to \$125,000. Lynch said they are looking at six months because Alan is the only person working in this job. Perry said they are looking at the training and this is why it is high. Lynch stated the mayor also spoke of the level of engineering the City wants to hire. He said this could make it a high-waged job, and well "in place" before Alan retires.

Perry asked about the Law Enforcement liability insurance being \$0. Lynch said he moved all the insurances into their own group. Lynch said the City did not get the official quote, but estimates this increasing by 2-3%

Perry asked Donald Leshko, Hazleton Fire Department Manager, regarding the overtime in the fire department. Leshko said the department will have four guys leaving in January, 2022. He stated there will be a lot of training and time with four new hires. He said they are hoping for a smooth transition. Leshko said in "his time" being in the City, this is the biggest turnover in the fire

department. He said within the next four to five years, there will be a whole new crew. Leshko stated the background checks are, currently, being done with the police department. He said they still have enough of individuals on their list, but with this hire, their list will be depleted. Leshko said the new trucks are coming in 2022. He said the four retirees have offered to train the new fire fighters.

Perry spoke of the Parking Department Line Item on Page 31. He said in 2020, it was \$119,000. and, currently, is \$112,000. He asked if this is for three full-time and three part-time. Lynch said they went "down to one" and kept at that level, for some time. He said they "raised" one from part-time to full-time. Perry asked what happens with the new Park Mobile meters. He asked if there will be more or less workers for this. Lynch said it should not be a "labor saver". He said it will help the City keep moving with a smaller staff. He said the City is looking to get an additional full-time employee giving parking tickets.

Perry spoke of the Code Department. He asked if the reason for the increased salary Line Item of \$330,000 is for hiring more code officers. Lynch said yes. He stated council did want to put more emphasis on code with more officers and with the City Hall union contract being "closed up and done". He said there is a good staff now and is a tough job. Perry said there is only \$2,000 in the overtime Line Item. Lynch said, as a department, he has seen this low. Lynch said the Code Department has employees working more than from 8-4 p.m. He said the code officers may come out at night to do some overtime.

Lynch said any department "specific" questions, between the first and second budget ordinance readings, council could send them his way and he will get specific detailed answers on any costs or details from the department managers.

Mundie asked about the Hazleton Airport. He said the Jet Fuel Line-Item sales ran from \$35,000 to \$484,000. Lynch said they are doing a tremendous amount of fuel sales. Mundie asked if this is from the two jets that are at the airport. Lynch said when the airport runway was extended, this opens the door to larger, corporate jets. He said these jets take much more amount of fuel. He said Dave Chronowski, Airport Manager, could get them more specific answers. Lynch said the airport is looking at more full-service for the corporate jets. He said this has been very positive.

Perry spoke of the Mayor Cusat's and his office salaries. He said Gary Perna is moving to the Recreation Department. He asked Gary if he is going to still do the Mayor Assistant position. Perna said no. He said this Line Item is left as a current salary position. Perry said they are talking the Mayor Assistant position does not need someone there all the time. Lynch said the four Administration "lumped" salaries also includes Allison Keegan's Human Resource salary. Barletta asked where Joe Zeller "is going". Perna said Zeller is only going to be doing Community Development.

Perry asked if the Health Officer is a "COVID-supported" position. Lynch said yes. Sacco asked if this position is just temporary for 2022. Lynch said the funding will run out and would be up to the City to continue "it on". Perry asked if this is the same for the Assistant City Administrator position. Lynch said yes. It was for an even \$40,000, and by the end of next year, will be up.

Perry asked if the police department is in line for their overtime. Lynch stated all the departments are disciplined with their budget. He said some do go over. He gave Leshko credit for his fire department in being extremely disciplined and does not go over. Lynch said the police department is a big "pot" of money and are, generally, about 3-4% below budget each year.

Perry spoke of the Code Contracted Services Line Item on page 35. He asked if this is for the GIS integration and recodification for the City Code. Lynch said this is for the GIS system and MY GOV. software.

Perry asked about the DPW Department overtime. He asked if this is due to the weather. Colombo said this is weather related. Lynch said the big storms, from January to March, in the winter, and overtime, of \$50,000, is due to weather events. Perry asked if the overtime, in the municipal garage, is for mechanics. Lynch said yes. Perry said with the new trucks and vehicles, they should not be breaking down. Leshko said they still do a lot of work. Sacco asked if they still fix the police cars. Leshko said yes. He said they fix the chief's cars and are "multi-tasking" for all departments. He said the new mechanics are very talented.

Barletta asked why the stormwater was not broken down for 2022. Lynch said this has nothing "tied-back" to Accufund and is only for illustrative purposes for council. He said if there would be a Stormwater Authority, this would be under this Line Item.

Perry asked if there is a way to lower insurance costs in training people. Lynch said the City's "mod" has come down about three tenths, from 1.9 to 1.6. He stated for workers compensation, they should see some final savings.

Perry asked about what the City expects in a Fund Balance for the end of the year. Lynch said he does not want to put "a number" on this. He said they are still working with their financial advisors, looking at ARP rules and are exploring on paying down debts.

Barletta asked if the City is looking to hire more employees at the airport on Page 53. She said the Hazleton Airport Salary Line Item, for 2021, was \$47,000 and in 2022, it is budgeted at \$75,000. Lynch said Dave is looking to hire. Lynch said Dave could give her a plan. He said some is just balancing their budget in their volume in the sales of fuel.

Perry asked about the Recreation expenditures increase on Page 68. Lynch said this includes a tenth of a mill plus some income expected from donations and sponsorship. He said Perna will try to focus on growing this through activities. He said the recent City Halloween event saw about 800 kids and this would be a good time to expand on recreation activities.

Perry said, as Mundie mentioned, the airport revenue has "jumped" up dramatically. Lynch said, for the past few years, the City has received a "boiler-plate" airport budget. He said, currently, Dave gave his own budget, for 2022. He stated if council wants more details, Dave could give them information. Perry asked when the DPW Department cuts the grass, at the airport, if this expense comes from the airport budget. Lynch said the airport pays for some things done there. Mundie asked Lynch if the airport has their own audit. Lynch said they have their own audit, done separately, through the City's normal audits, and also federal audits. Mundie asked if Lynch could send the airport audit to all council members. Lynch said he will send this to them. Perry asked about the airport manager's salary going up dramatically. Lynch said these were the old numbers in the final budget. He said Dave was hired at the salary of \$57,000.

Perry asked if the City has received the Cost Analysis grant. Lynch said this has not happened yet. He said the Cost Analysis looks at what should be paid back to the City. Perry said it will also let the City know if they are overcharging.

Perry said the Total Revenue is estimated at a loss of 1% total taxable assessed value. Lynch said, since the reassessment done, in 2009, the City has trended to loss about 1%. He said his could be due through lower sales or assessment appeals. He said he expects this trend should end, in the next few years, with the buildings coming in. Perry said people are purchasing and putting in rental properties. He said this is growing dramatically.

Perry stated one tenth of a mill is \$86,000. Lynch said this is based on a collection rate of 90% of the value of one mill. Perry asked how this would affect homeowners. He said the median tax bill, in the City, is \$520.00. Lynch stated it comes out to \$76.80 per household. He said a median value of a home, in the City, is \$76,400.

Perry said the process, currently, is to pass this budget. He said the new city council members have a chance to open up the budget until February, 2022. Lynch said he could have a department head come to speak on any specific items that council would like.

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

ORDINANCE PASSES ON 1ST READING UNANIMOUSLY

(2ND AND 3RD READINGS)

None

RESOLUTIONS:

None

New Business: None.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: None

Comments from Mayor: None- absent.

Donald Leshko, Fire Department Director, wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Comments from City Administrator: None

Comments from Council: Mundie wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Sacco wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Colombo told everyone to keep the Wisconsin families close to their heart with thoughts and prayers. He also said keep your own families close. He extended his condolences in the death of John Milot of the Hazleton Sewer Authority. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Colombo said all five city council members felt CEO was doing nothing to feed the poor families in the City for Thanksgiving. He said there are 250 meals, prepared by Sacco, to feed and deliver to the homebound in the City. Perry said Vesuvio's, Jimmy Sabatino, donated a lot of vegetables and potatoes. He said they are delivering to the homebound. He invited anyone to come and deliver, come to Frankies, Wyoming Street, November 24th at 5:00 p.m. Sacco said Hazleton Unico is also donating their time. Colombo said Dorothy George, Hazleton Housing Authority, stated all the homebound are more than grateful for the meals. Colombo said, hopefully, by Christmas time, they could do something in-person. He reminded all of Winterfest on November 27, 2021 at City View Park.

Barletta wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Perry asked about ordinances passed for stop signs to be placed in the City. He asked how the City department managers are made aware of this. Lynch said council should distribute the information to the mayor and, then, he will make each department aware. Leshko said DPW Department gets many work orders from the Parking Department. Perry asked how they are made aware of these. Gary Perna said the City Clerk sends out the city council meeting votes, after each meeting, to all City department managers. He said, then, he and all department managers go over the report and review every ordinance and resolution that was passed by City council. He said he cannot say it is "100% bullet-proof", but since he has been here, it seems to work.

Perry wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Comments from Junior Council: Paul Neyhart, Jr. asked what effect of imports and shipping of goods would have on the price of jet fuel. Lynch said he will check with Dave at the airport. He said he is very skillful and knows his job. Barletta said Lynch will give him the answer at the next meeting.

Adjournment: Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.