

**MINUTES  
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2020**

**Call to Order:** Council met in regular session on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 via ZOOM Teleconferencing. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 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 October 14, 2020 Regular Meetings were approved unanimously.

**Presentations/Proclamations/Communications:**

1. Oath of Office Given to the Incoming Junior Council Members. Jeff DeAngelo and Jillian McGeehin were given the Oath of Office. The new Junior Council members were welcomed by all.
2. Ryan Hottenstein, Vice-President of Financial S&Lutions, discussed the City of Hazleton's purchasing and financing options.

Mr. Perry said it is almost a "rehash" of what the City has talked about. He said, in "light of the fact", that the City is looking to purchase trucks, city council members may have questions for Mr. Hottenstein. He said city council has the prior paperwork given to them by Mr. Hottenstein on the refinancing options. Perry stated the City is refinancing about \$8,000,000.

Mr. Hottenstein stated the intent is to refinance the City's outstanding debt outside of the 0% interest loan from DCED, for straight cost-savings, high to low refunding, and at the same time, looking at issuing new debt to fund some of the projects the City has for its capital improvement plan. Perry asked if it is \$8,000,000 plus \$3,000,000, whatever the City decides to "take on". Hottenstein stated this is correct; it is whatever the City decides to take out. Perry asked, currently, if the market is great. Hottenstein said the market, from a historic perspective, is at an all-time low. He said this with a "caveat". He stated it was lower three weeks ago, with the rates "creeping up", primarily due to volume. He said, last week, this week and the week before, there are all-time records when it comes to transactions getting in the market due to the incredibly low rates, out there, and trying to get in. He stated everyone is trying to get in with the volume being massive. He said "supply and demand" is taken into account. Hottenstein said rates are incredibly low. He stated if there are projects that municipalities need to undertake, it is still a good time to do this. Barletta asked what the rates are right now. Hottenstein said when talking about a bond issue, it is blended rates. He stated the shorter maturities have a lower yield than the longer maturities, but from a tax-exempt perspective, there are all end yields of about 3%. Perry asked what the City's bond rating is. Hottenstein stated he would have to get the City rated because it has been a long time. He said they would anticipate given the information they received about the City's improving finances. He said the City would receive a credit rating that is an investment grade rating but going to S&P (Standard & Poor's) they would not have the current rating for the City. Perry asked if this depends on the City's audits. Hottenstein said yes, it would depend on a number of factors and they would need all the audits. He stated it depends

on the City's financial performance, the City's management and fiscal policies, demographic information (wealth of the area) and undertake the affordability of the debt taken out and the ability to pay.

Mundie asked if Hottenstein recommends the City spends \$2,500,000 before doing the refinancing. Hottenstein said he is not recommending anything. He said it is up, to the City, on what to do. He stated the City has projects they need to complete. He said if the City needs to order trucks with a lead time of 18 months, the City will need to sign a contract and need them on a certain date. He stated this is up to the City. Hottenstein stated if the City, is saying, they need these trucks, and allocate these funds, he said there is nothing wrong with the City moving forward, prior, to having the funds in hand. Mundie asked if it would affect the City's bond rating or financial situation before putting the order in before the refinancing. Hottenstein said it would not impact the City's finances.

Perry stated the City is not paying for them. He said two things could happen; one is the bond market could go "belly-up" or council does not approve refinancing. He said, then, the City would need to buy the trucks on their own. Mundie asked if the City could rescind the order before taking the trucks. Perry said he does not know if the City could stop the order because the delivery time is 18 months out. He stated PEL is recommending the City needs the trucks. Mundie said Leshko stated it would be 12 months for the delivery of trucks. He asked if the City orders the trucks and does not refinance, what would the City need to do. Perry said the City would have to go to a bank and get money. He said if the City does not refinance the debt, it would be "crazy". Mundie said he is all for buying the trucks with refinancing and showing the City could pay for them.

Donald Leshko, Hazleton Fire Chief, said if the bond market closes, the City could do purchasing of these vehicles. He said he spoke to multiple cities over the weekend and the beginning of this week. Leshko said some cities are paying the prices, currently, last year for trucks. He said they paid this price last year. He said the City has been talking about this since 2018, and Sam Galski wrote an article, in the Standard Speaker. Leshko said in 2018, he told city council members that the total cost would be \$1,500,00-\$2,000,000. He said, now, the price is up to \$2,400,000. He said he came in with the best numbers that he could. Leshko said the bond market may end tomorrow. He said the City could do a municipal lease on the vehicles. He said, at the end of it, the City owns them "Scott-free". Leshko said this is what multiple cities are doing right now with leasing fire apparatus, police cars, and DPW vehicles. He stated the City, currently, is leasing DPW vehicles. Leshko said if the vehicles are ordered, they are built to the City's specifications. Perry asked if the City could get out of the contract once it is signed. Leshko said he does not know the answer, he would have to ask. He said there are other options. Leshko said other cities have received fantastic rates in leasing fire vehicles. He said this is over a 10-15-year period. Perry asked if this would preclude the City to receiving grants. Leshko said he is still awaiting on the LSA grants from 2019 and have moved the 2020 LSA grant deadline to November 30<sup>th</sup>. Leshko stated the prior deadline was December 31<sup>st</sup>. He told city council to expect resolutions, for LSA grants, coming soon. He said he found this out today. Perry said if the City would get grant money, this could reduce the amount, and have more money to do other things. Barletta said it would pay the City's debt down with this. Leshko said there was a question proposed, for the City, to talk with Senator Yudichak regarding what Wilkes-Barre did. He said Wilkes-Barre received \$400,000, in an LSA grant, to pay for their fire trucks. He said every other dollar, in Wilkes-Barre's projects, is being funded through Community Development. He said this is how Wilkes-Barre's Fire Chief has explained. Leshko said they got a partial LSA grant. He said he will write two LSA grants and put this in front of city council for approval for the fire departments building projects. Perry said he knows Leshko tries. He stated he is the "grant

man". Colombo agreed.

Barletta stated she has been reviewing the numbers that Hottenstein gave council members. She asked if the City adds the \$3,00,000 "on" to the refinancing of the bond, would this increase it to 20 years to 2040. Hottenstein said this is correct, but he does not have the paperwork in front of him. He said this is the way it was run. Barletta asked who would decide the refinancing option. Lynch and Hottenstein said it would be city council's decision. Lynch stated the City is allocating debt service, over time, in the budget. She asked when city council would decide this, when the audit is done. Lynch stated if the City is still on track for the audit completion, the City could do this within the calendar year. Hottenstein said the ultimate decision is if the City is going to purchase the trucks. He said if the answer is yes, incumbering these funds and ordering these funds, now, will not have any impact to access the markets. He said the ability to access the markets with the City's financial performance and release of the audits. Barletta asked if the City would borrow \$3,000,000, if it would cost the City an extra \$1,000,000. Hottenstein said it depends on the interest rate and the structure chosen. Hottenstein said then they would put a time-and-event schedule and a financing plan together. He said he would bring this to city council, what they would be financing, and how long. Then, they would get bond counsel involved with Brian Kosalensky. Then they would start working on drafting these documents and all the information. He said they would come back to city council, again, for the approval of ordinances and necessary paperwork for financing. He said the City would have all these approvals. Barletta stated the City would have to wait, for approval, to see what the rate would be at that time. Hottenstein said the rate would not be "locked-in" until the City prices the bonds. He said once the City prices the bonds, the rates would be "locked-in" based on the market rates at the time of pricing. Hottenstein said they could not change and are fixed for the entire term forever. Barletta said the City is taking a "little bit of a risk" looking at what the rates are now compared to what they would be in November or December. Hottenstein agreed. He said the interest rates, both ways, all the time. Perry stated the anticipation is if the market will go up or down. Barletta said she likes the last option with saving money in refinancing the current debt. Perry said the question is if the City goes beyond the debt service, and borrowing the money, the City would have to ask the public to cover the difference, with new money, and a higher debt service. Perry asked if the City could lock it in to limit the City's borrowing. Hottenstein said it depends on the current City's maturity. He said, currently, the amounts decrease and there is room in there to not exceed what the current debt service is. Perry asked even with still borrowing \$3,000,000. Hottenstein said this is correct. He said it is at the current level or lower. Lynch agreed.

Mundie asked Lynch when he anticipates the City's audit will be done and if he received a time frame. Lynch said the auditor is still comfortable with the 2018 audit being completed by November, 2020. He stated the timeline, for the 2019 audit, is the end of January, 2021. Lynch said Hottenstein feels comfortable with the 2018 audit completion. He stated he is looking at November, 2020, for the audit to be done. Hottenstein said beginning to end, they are looking at about 90 days from the time that the City says, "OK, let's move forward", to closing. Mundie asked if this is because of the City's audits or the timeframe needed. Hottenstein said this is, typically, the timeframe needed. He said, under normal circumstances, they could do it as fast as 45 days. Hottenstein stated this is really, "pushing it", and they could not do this now. He said this is because of the rating agencies and volume. He said there are so many issues, coming to market, that the rating agencies do not have time to process what is in "front of them". He said, instead of four weeks, they are asking for eight weeks. Mundie asked if the rating agencies are the "main hold-up". Hottenstein said they are one of them, but the City still needs to put together the offering documents, get in front of the rating agencies, get them to provide the rating, and readings of the ordinances. He said all of this needs to be sent to DCED for their approval. He

said they have 20 days, upon receipt, to review it and giving their approval. He said even after pricing, the City needs to go through the bond and loan documents and takes time. He said the City would look at about 90 days: 30 days of prep work, 30 days in the middle of pricing and the transaction, and then 30 days, at the end, to close. Perry asked if these numbers are based on borrowing \$3,000,000 more. Hottenstein said, "I think they were". He said he thought he brought the sheets with him but did not. Barletta said this gives the council a "good ballpark". Hottenstein said if the City changes their mind or amount, they could give the City an updated impact on those changes. Perry stated the City could borrow any amount they want. Hottenstein said it needs to be within state limits of 250% of gross revenues. He said, with leasing, it goes up to 350%. Mundie asked if he has done refinancing recently and any rates. Hottenstein stated they have done a lot of refinancing. Perry asked if they did the City of Allentown's refinancing. Hottenstein said no. Hottenstein said they have done the City of Reading and Gettysburg Municipal Authority. Mundie asked Hottenstein if he has a rate. Hottenstein said they are blended rates since they are bond issues. He said the 1-year maturity is lower rate than the 25-year maturity and have been under 3%. Hottenstein said his company did a restructure and new money project for the City of Easton. He said this was done as taxable. He said the "all-in-rate" was about 3% and this was for 20 years. Mundie stated a lot of cities are in trouble due to deficits. Hottenstein said it has been dependent on the type of City and the activity that goes on in that City. Hottenstein gave an example: The cities of Shamokin and Easton. There is one City that does not have a lot of hospitality and tourism in Shamokin, but Easton has more of this. He said he has seen an impact in the City of Easton due to their attractions, i.e.- Crayola Factory and tourism, and has been shut down for the summer as opposed to the City of Shamokin. He stated it is a "mixed bag" on what he has seen on certain municipalities and the types of services and opportunities going on there. Mundie said the state of Pennsylvania will take some "major hits" in their budgets. He stated they will not be giving out much money to help cities. Hottenstein said he has seen the state being impacted more than a lot of municipalities. He said if reviewing the revenue sources, the state has a more diverse revenue base with the gasoline tax. He said this was impacted with the coronavirus pandemic and people not traveling. He said these are revenues that municipalities are not depending on.

Perry asked if it depends on what the City picks and could go to year 2030 or 2040. Hottenstein agreed. He stated his company sold a new money transaction for the tiny borough in Northampton County named Stockertown with a 30-year maturity. He said it depends on the objectives of the City. He said his company worked on a transaction for the City of Erie with a 40-year transaction. He said he would never recommend taking out debt longer than the asset life of the asset that is financed. Mundie asked Hottenstein if he needs the City's 2018 & 2019 audits before refinancing. Hottenstein stated it depends on how quickly they are received. He said, currently, if they have the 2018 audit with 2019 audit delayed eleven months, but getting into the future in 2021, and not having 2019 audit, it would be further delayed. He said if they receive the City's 2019 audit by January 2021, the City would be fine. Mundie asked Lynch if there are penalties for receiving the audits at the deadline. He asked him if he reviewed the contract. Lynch stated the audit is the function of city council. Mundie asked him if he looked at the agreement to move the City forward. Perry asked if there are "drop-dead" dates. Mundie said he thought they were. Lynch said not that he could find, unless there are documents, within city council, that he does not have privy to. Mundie asked Lynch if he could send city council members a copy of the auditor's contracts. Lynch said he will send what he could find. Perry asked Atty. Logsdon if he reached out to the auditor. Atty. Logsdon said he did reach out to them and told the auditor that the City needs "firm dates" because this is affecting the City financially. He said the auditor stated he will get this to the City as stated by Lynch. Mundie asked if Atty. Logsdon reviewed the contracts to see if there are deadline dates. Atty. Logsdon said he did not see it recently but did not see any deadline dates. Mundie asked Lynch and the city clerk to send

city council any auditor contract information. They both agreed. Perry said Atty. Logsdon, legally, could do this for council due to a lot of paperwork.

**Bid Opening:** None

**Courtesy of the Floor (ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY):** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, spoke of the Land Bank Ordinance. He said he is strong opposition to it. He said if it is about blight. Rabo spoke of the recent presentation by Mr. Gulotta, who is very well-renowned, in the state. Rabo said the City would need a blight plan and feasibility assessment, in place, before considering a Land Bank. Rabo said Gulotta stated the City also needs a strong code enforcement department. He said the City does not have this and only has two licensed and certified code enforcement officials. Rabo said one is the code supervisor and another person. He stated for anyone to say that a Land Bank could be pushed through is just “absurd”. He asked why the mayor is “ramrodding” this through. Rabo said it is not about blight because council will need to make the determination to listen to the experts.

He also spoke of Ordinance 2020-26- Setting of Licenses, Fees, and Inspections. Rabo said looking at the uniformity clause in the state and federal constitution they are not in line with the fees pertaining to licensing which is in the Third-Class City Code and property maintenance code.

Rabo spoke of the Luzerne County Hazard Plan. He asked if Police Chief Schoonmaker and Fire Chief Leshko reviewed this because he sent them a copy. He stated Mr. Pedri and Mr. Wufsus were the only ones who went to the county on behalf of the Hazard Plan.

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## **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

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

**Ordinance 2020-25**                      An Ordinance Creating the City of Hazleton Land Bank **(1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Sacco.

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

Mundie said he is not totally against the Land Bank. He said when the mayor was a councilman, he brought it up to him when he was president of council. He said they needed a plan and a budget. Mundie said this is exactly what the expert told the City they need. Mundie stated he would look at it, more seriously, if the City had these two things. He stated it will take time and effort to run a Land Bank. He said the City is starting off with a Land Bank and not doing what the City should do and where would it go. He said the City is starting off on the “wrong foot” because the expert told them exactly what they need to do. Mundie said Gulotta stated the City needs to do a blight and business budget plan. He offered Mayor Cusat help in creating a business plan to show him he is not totally against the Land Bank. He said the mayor is moving ahead, with this, and ignoring what the expert said the City needs to do to flourish and succeed.

Perry stated city council received a City of New Castle blight strategy plan from Mr. Gulotta. He asked Mayor Cusat if there is Community Development money available. Mayor Cusat said the City could use Community Development money to start. He said the City is using the Community

Development money, currently, for all demolitions and administration costs. He said the City is seeing no benefit from this. He stated with the Land Bank, the process would be the same, get the properties and own them and recoup some of the investment. Mayor Cusat said the City, currently, is doing people a favor and taking their property down to make it sellable or putting it somewhere to be sold at an auction. He said the City is still not seeing anything. He stated with a Land Bank, there would not be properties sold and re-sold, every two years, at a tax sale, and causing nightmares for some neighbors. Mayor Cusat said the City would acquire them, through the "trump" bid, go through the same process in demolishing them, and utilizing the property to fund the Land Bank. He said he is not looking for a huge Land Bank to take over properties and maintaining them. He said he does not think the City needs a lot of money. Mayor Cusat said he does not plan on spending a lot of money, but there are several properties, in the City, that they should acquire, take "them down", and dispose of them properly, where it benefits everybody in certain neighborhoods. Mayor Cusat stated there have been certain properties that were "taken down", going to a tax sale, and the City sees nothing from it. He said there was a property on South Church Street. He said the City spent \$81,000 to "bring it down", and the City will not see "one penny from it". He asked how this would benefit the City. He said if the City owned the property and sold it \$40,000, at least it would put a property back on the tax roll.

Perry asked Pedri if he identified a lot of properties and have they done any assessments. Pedri stated the property issues have been identified, he feels, that have significant problems with vacancy and vagrancy. He stated there are about 25 properties on the list. He said there are 5-6 properties, on top of the list, to move to demolition. Perry said instead of doing good, in the City, code is going back to the same properties "over and over". Pedri said there are some problems with notifying the owners. Also, the owner comes in and does some work, leaves it, and then after one year, they are back to "square one". He stated a Land Bank would be helpful in getting these properties, into the coffers, of the City, and then the City would be able to utilize these funds. Pedri said the property on South Church Street, which was a significant "eye sore", cost \$81,000 to demolish. He said there is a lien on it, but the property is still owned by the owner and is up for tax sale. Pedri stated it did not go for tax sale because the City sent a letter to Elite Revenue that there is a \$81,000 lien on it. He said the bidding was started at \$81,000. He said there are several owners, around this property, that are looking for parking. He said there are three property owners, in this vicinity, that would give the City money if the City owned the property. Perry asked Mayor Cusat if the City had a Land Bank if it would allow the City to own the property. Mayor Cusat said correct.

Barletta said she agrees with both Mayor Cusat and Mundie. She stated a Land Bank would be a good idea but is not 100% sure the City is in this position yet. She said the consultant stated the City needs a blight plan. In this blight plan, the City needs to specify their goals and everything "drawn out". She asked if the City has \$50,000, in CD, "ready to go". Mayor Cusat stated there is over \$300,000 in the demolition budget. Barletta asked if the City wants to use "all this up" for a Land Bank. She said the plan states the City needs a very strong code department. Barletta stated there needs to be a little bit of an improvement in code before even taking on a Land Bank. She stated the City needs to work out the process and procedures first, see some success with the code department and see a little change in the code department. Barletta said the City would not be at this point, taking over properties, if there was a strong code department. Barletta asked if this would increase the insurance cost with having a Land Bank. Mayor Cusat stated the Land Bank would have to have their own insurance plan if it owned properties. He said if the City had nothing in the inventory, then it would not need insurance. Mayor Cusat stated if the Land Bank would take one property it would need insurance on that specific property and when it is sold, then it would not need insurance anymore. He said as long as there is no inventory, the Land Bank

would not need insurance. Barletta asked if the Land Bank would need insurance when it was “started up”. Mayor Cusat said no. He said there is nothing required until the Land Bank acquires its first property. Barletta stated the City would want to see something succeed so then the Land Bank would need insurance. Mayor Cusat said there is no need to have insurance until the property is acquired. Barletta said she thought Mayor Cusat stated he had a property ready. Mayor Cusat said it is still not the City’s. He said the City needs to go through the process of acquiring them, bring them down, and then the Land Bank would have insurance on the vacant lot. He said the several properties, he has in mind, are properties that would be taken down and have an immediate disposal plan to sell off to a neighboring property, utilize for a parking lot, or to help residents expand a business. Perry said the City is not looking to stockpile properties. Mayor Cusat agreed. He said the City does not want to stockpile anything. Perry said the City would want to get them back on the tax roll. Perry asked if Joe Zeller would be the director, Atty. Logsdon be the solicitor, and Redevelopment Authority be the “board”. Atty. Logsdon said he had “written it up” where he would act as the solicitor until the Land Bank is “up and running” and would get their own solicitor. Perry said it would not cost the City a “dime” and would just sit there until ready to go. Mayor Cusat stated it would not cost the City a “dime” until they decide to utilize this. He said council could pass the ordinance, like a lot of ordinances passed, and never were carried out. He stated there were a lot of boards created and never operated. He said having the ordinance in place, he could appoint people to it, and they would have six months to come up with a plan. Mayor Cusat said then he could explain what he would want to do to the board and let them decide how to move forward. He said until there is a plan, in place, no one is going to come and sit in a room to start talking about the plan until there is a purpose. Perry asked if it would still not cost the City any money. Mayor Cusat said it would not cost any money until they go to the first tax sale. Barletta said the only cost would be for Atty. Logsdon to get the Land Bank started. Mayor Cusat agreed. Barletta said she does not feel comfortable doing this if the main top four things, the consultant said, is the most important, and the City is not very strong right now. She said the City needs to focus on getting stronger, in the code department, before doing the Land Bank. Mayor Cusat said he is not asking the code department to do anything. He said he is looking to go to the people and asking them to turn the properties over to the City. Barletta said the code department will be doing this. Mayor Cusat said not necessarily. He said code enforcement will be doing their job and cite properties. He stated there are certain properties the City would like to acquire where the City makes a telephone call to them and ask them to make a donation to the City, then becomes a tax write-off for them, and move with Community Development to start the demolition process. He said he does not see code enforcement getting involved, at all, and does not need insurance until they have a property. Barletta asked why the consultant, that “runs all this”, suggesting the City needs a strong code department. Mayor Cusat said it depends on what their plan is. Barletta asked what the City’s plan is what he has “in his head” with taking these properties and “flipping them over”. Mayor Cusat said yes.

Lynch said the one term that people should “throw out here” is “mothballing it”. He said if just enabling it, passing it, and it could exist, with just “mothballing it”. He said six months, from now, someone wants to donate a \$200,000 property, and all of a sudden, there is the City’s start-up money. He said if there is a property that comes “into their hands”, then they just need to do the bear minimum in the terms of the City providing and the Land Bank paying the City back after closing. Barletta said council asked Gulotta if they need the ordinance in place. She said Gulotta stated, “what is the point. The City needs all of this before the City does this”. She said she does not want to do this backwards. She stated Gulotta is very successful, gave them all the Land Banks, and she feels the City is going against everything. She stated the City needs to succeed but needs to be done the correct way. Sacco asked if any city council members could look at code to give reassurance on what the City needs to do here. Pedri stated he could provide city council

with the list of properties the code department has that are the most “egregious”, i.e.- the American Legion building on Broad Street. He said this is “tied-up”, right now, because the owner cannot be located, it went to tax sale, and fell through. He said if the City could acquire this property, through Elite Revenue, at this point, would be perfect. Pedri stated the owner, next door, would like to have this property and stated he would buy it. He said he will get a list of the 25 properties, with ID numbers, and using this as the City’s inventory, that have the most problems, over to city council members. He said these are the 25 things that are the most important things, for the City, to resolve. Sacco asked if city council gets to appoint anyone for the Land Bank board. She asked if they pick two people or could two city council members be on the board. Atty. Logsdon said the way he drafted is two members appointed by the mayor, two members appointed by majority vote of city council, the Chairman of the Redevelopment Authority, a representative of the Hazleton Housing Authority, and a member of the Community Development Office. He said he excluded any elected official. Perry stated the Third-Class City Code does not allow the City to do this.

Mundie asked once the board is together, will they do a blight plan or tentative budget and business plan. Mayor Cust said once he gets approval and getting people to sit down and start discussing this, he would show them his plans on the first three to four properties. Mundie asked if this is part of his plan to get these properties. Mayor Cusat said yes. He stated he knows what properties to get first, then sit down with the board and they could “work it out”. Mundie said if he would get a blight plan and budget once the board is formed, he would be, inclined, that it would succeed. Mayor Cusat said, in 2014 & 2015, he spent a ton of time to put on presentations to move this forward. He also spent a ton of work, into this, came up to the last vote to council, and voted it down. He said he is not taking any more of his time or anyone else’s time to further this until he has a commitment, from council, to move forward. Mundie stated he is not totally against the Land Bank, but he is ignoring the advice, from the expert, doing it on his own, and doing it “off the cuff”. Mayor Cusat said “give him a board”, and if they do not like the plan, they could rescind the ordinance. He told council to give him an ordinance and board members and, then, he will get a plan and a budget. Barletta said council could amend this ordinance to reflect this. He said city council could rescind this ordinance at any time. Mayor Cusat said if they feel it is not working correctly, they could rescind the ordinance and the Land Bank “goes away”. Perry stated they already have “all these people”. Mundie stated he has spoken with the director, of Pittston, for 45 minutes. He stated it is a lot of hard work with people committed to it. Mundie said he went into detail on how it works. He said they will spend a lot of time, effort, and money. He stated the solicitor, of Pittston, donated his time. He said each city, consisting of three cities, had to take care of any properties in their city. He said this would take away a lot of resources, in the City, with a “million other problems”. Mayor Cusat said they are doing this, right now, with the problem properties. He said the City is spending hours of time on code and solicitor time to send out notices of violations and going to court with them. He said the City is spending money on council, spending money on code, and spending money to “board them up”. Mayor Cusat said it is the same expenses they have “one way or another”. He said one outcome is they will get the property and money, and the other is doing the same work and getting nothing for it. He said there are residents, up in the Heights, moaning about properties, that the City could not take care of for years. He said there are rats, skunks, people living in them, and it is the same properties. He said if the City does not have something with “a bite”, to go after them, the properties will sit there. He said the City could threaten them “all they want”, and they will not do anything. Mayor Cusat said it will go to a tax sale, and two years later, it will be bought by a person who is out-of-state. He stated the properties are “going through the roof here”. Mayor Cusat stated they will come to Hazleton, with a contractor, and say, “hell no”, and will let it sit there, with \$4,000 invested. He said there are people living next door to it and move out of town because of the “zoo” next to



them. Barletta stated she said the City would not be in this position because the City needs a strong code department. Pedri stated there is only one factor with the number of citations. Barletta said, in 2019, there were 296 properties; 100 were withdrawn, and there were 22 properties that were cleaned up. She said she calls Pedri and emails him without any response. She said the code department does not respond to say they received the complaint. Mayor Cusat said Pedri is not responsible to respond to council or any other complainer. She said city council sends over complaints from residents. Pedri said he sends city council his list with the code complaints on this list. Barletta said for weeks she has not had a response. Mayor Cusat said she needs to fill out a code form and give it to a code officer. She asked if she needs to come to City Hall. Mayor Cusat said yes, this is what he does, and makes them fill out the forms. Barletta said she calls the code department and they do not answer the telephone. She said some residents do not feel comfortable coming to City Hall and then call a council member for them to put a code complaint in. She stated this has not been a problem until about 3 1/2 weeks ago. She said she received a response that the code department would follow up, but receives nothing now. Pedri said it is not a problem. He said each code complaint gets assigned to a code inspector. Pedri said these are listed on the code lists sent to city council members each month. He said most of the cases are taken care of. Pedri stated the ones going to citations are taken care of by citations. He said they do other notice of violations with people coming in, getting the building resolved, and everything is taken care of. He said 50% of the cases coming in get resolved and do not have to go to citations. Pedri said if the resident states they need one month to fix it and does not go to a citation. He said this is a factor to look at but is not the only factor. Barletta stated the code complaints, for two months, has not made it for follow-up with resident complaints not being on the list either. Leshko said he has received numerous code complaints, with Mundie calling him. He stated with the recent meeting with Magistrate Zola, the City has changed some procedures in what the City is doing with following through with code citations. He stated the meeting was an "eye opener" for all of them. He said, the bottom line, the code department gets overwhelmed with all the complaints. He said arguing, back and forth, will not solve any issues and get any better. Leshko said if Barletta has any complaints, she could send them to Pedri and also to him. He said he and Pedri will work together to get follow-ups done. He said it is always a team effort to make it work. Perry said the "big key" are the 25 properties. He said the fire department would appreciate this too. Barletta asked what changes, were made, to make it better. Leshko said a lot of changes in the citation process. He said Pedri has changed what Zola proposed. Barletta said at this meeting, it was an "eye opener". She said it is discouraging to be told to do a right-to-know request as a council member. She said there are complaints and driving by them, from May, they are still not cleaned up. Leshko said there are properties on Kiefer Avenue and had to send the fire department to "board up" with code "boarding it up" numerous times. He said this is a problem property.

Colombo said he understands where Pedri "is going". He said city council was told the property, on Wyoming Street, would be taken care of. He said, "enough is enough", and asked about the high grass issue. Pedri asked what property it is. Colombo said it is the old St. John's Parochial School building. Pedri said it is being taken care of now. He stated there is a new owner. Pedri said they are, currently, doing interior demolition and cleaned the outside of the property. He said the owner added dumpsters and is adding on an L-shape to the building. The owner is also adding two of three businesses onto the first floor and 28 apartments upstairs. He said the owner has come into City Hall for the demolition permits but has not come in for anything else. Pedri said the owner stated he would plan to do this in 2021.

Perry stated some residents need to clean-up their own properties. He said the City cannot do "everything for everybody". He said they all need to work together as Leshko stated. He said it

will not be easy if everyone does not work on it. Perry said he could feel Barletta's frustration. He stated city council members get calls all the time from residents. Barletta said it is not a good reflection, on the City, when the properties from April and May have nothing done. Perry stated the only thing the code department is doing is identifying the properties. Perry asked Atty. Logsdon if there is anything else the code department would be involved with in identifying these properties in the Land Bank.

Atty. Logsdon stated in terms of the process, the Land Bank, once it gets going, would be its own entity. He said the code department will be "business as usual, down there". He said they will not be the "army" or branch of the Land Bank. Atty. Logsdon stated they will be doing there normal NOV process, citing, and the normal hearing process if the City would need to go to a citation. He said it would be a good tool for some of the best people to communicate with the Land Bank. Barletta said since it is its own entity, the City would need to start with Community Development, and then fund itself. She asked if anything would come out of the general fund. Atty. Logsdon said this would be the start-up for this. He said he was reviewing another presentation, from a Land Bank, that a portion of the sale should go back to directly funding the Land Bank. He stated this could be put in the rules and regulations. Mundie said there was a demolition fund set up at one of the county's and the county collected for the Land Bank's to use for funding, under Section 422. Mayor Cusat said he remembers Mundie talking about this. He said a portion of the property tax collected, after the property goes back on the tax rolls, would go back to the Land Bank to fund it for the future. Mundie said this is the purpose, of it, to be self-sustaining. He asked Atty. Logsdon if there could be an amendment added to have a blight, assessment plan, and budget within three months once the board is seated. Atty. Logsdon said he could put it in there but does not know if it would operate as a condition. Mundie said the City would like to see this within 90 days. Mayor Cusat said if city council is not happy, city council could put a new ordinance on and rescind this ordinance. He said it could be discussed among them and could give a timeline. Mundie said the consultant told the City what it needs to succeed, and he wants this. Perry asked if the City could get a plan within the next two weeks. Mayor Cusat said the City would not get a plan until there are seven members on the board. Perry said, at least, outline the goals. Mayor Cusat stated if it is not passed, he is done with this, will not bring it up again and he "does not care". He stated he has spent a lot of time, for this, in 2014 & 2015. Barletta stated city council is trying to work with him. She stated after the first reading, for second and third reading, of the ordinance, if city council could have more. Mayor Cusat said not until he has a board and will not put a plan together until there is a board. He said once there is a board, he will explain his thoughts, to the board, and come up with their own plan, and his wishes. Mayor Cusat stated he cannot force them to do it. He stated all he could explain, to the board, is his vision. Perry said Mayor Cusat would appoint two members, city council would appoint two members, the Chairman of the Redevelopment would be a member, and the Housing Authority. He stated the board could be set-up quickly. He stated Joe Zeller would also be a member. Perry said other people, from the Redevelopment Authority, could be members. Barletta asked if there would be any cost to the taxpayers with using Community Development money and is self-funded. Mayor Cusat said this is the plan. Perry says the ordinance does not state that taxpayer money would be spent. He asked if the City needs to wait for a tax sale. Mayor Cusat stated the City could receive donations. He said if someone dies, people want to know how they could get rid of the property. He said they could donate a property to the Land Bank. Perry stated banks could donate properties. Mayor Cusat stated a lot of banks do not want the headache of maintaining the property. He said, also, the code department is "on them". He said the City could get the property, off their repository, for \$500.00. Perry said forming a Land Bank would alleviate the stress on the code department. Mayor Cusat said this would enable the City to do things a lot faster. He said he does not need to go to the code

department with a notice of violation, citations, and then go to court. Mayor Cusat said if the property owner wants “out”, he could sign it over, to the Land Bank, and then the Land Bank could move on from there. Barletta asked if it is just a “sign of a paper”. Perry said they would sign the deed over to the Land Bank. He said they would just need a title search to make sure there are no liens, and the title is clear. Barletta said, from this point, then the committee would decide what to do. Mayor Cusat said yes. He said his suggestion would be to accept properties only that have a final outcome. He stated they do not want to accept a property that cannot be “flipped” within six months. Mundie said he agrees, but this is part of a blight plan. Mayor Cusat said this is part of his plan. He said once the board is created, he has no say in the plan. He said the board might have another plan. Mundie stated the board will take the advice of the mayor and city council. Mayor Cusat said city council has two members, he appoints two, and there are three other members. He said all they need to do is express their feelings. Mundie said the goal is to clean-up blight, in the City, and this is what the Land Bank, could do, if it is run correctly. Mundie said if Mayor Cusat gets the board to give city council a tentative plan and budget, he has his vote. Mayor Cusat said he will get city council, a plan, within 12 weeks of the approval of the members.

Perry stated Pedri will get city council members the information.

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

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

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**Ordinance 2020-26**

An Ordinance Amending Ordinance Nos. 10-108, 94-12, 95-18, 95-26, 2003-07, 2005-8, 2006-34, 2007-9, 2007-29, 2009-17, 2010-2, 2011-8, 2012-9, 2015-25, & 2013-5, 2016-31 and Chapters 24, 140, & 203 of the Hazleton City Code for the Setting of Licenses, Fees and Inspections  
**(1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

**On the Question:**

Perry said city council members have a copy of all the previous ordinances. He said Mayor Cusat and Atty. Logsdon got a necessity when doing the codification process to uniform these numbers. Mayor Cusat said this ordinance is considered Chapter 24 of the Code Book, known as the Fee Scale. He stated this has a lot of different information that is referred in the Code Book. He said while doing the codification process, they recognized this should be “cleaned-up” now before the 2021 licensing and fees go out. He said this is why it is on the agenda, quickly, without having much discussion. Barletta said she does not understand why it was changed, in 2016, to different prices. Mayor Cusat stated it should all be the same because there is just as much paperwork done for a ash hauler, a bank, or a bus terminal. He said all this stuff does not need to be specific. He said a “business is a business”. He said they should all be in uniform. Mundie asked if he ran a projection if it is “revenue-neutral”, will be even, or lose or gain money. He said it will be a little bit “of a hit” to the revenue side. Mundie asked how much of a “hit”. Barletta said there were seven business licenses changes. She said one was changed from \$300.00 to \$100.00, one from \$150.00 to \$100.00, one was \$200.00 to \$100.00, one was \$125.00 to \$100.00 and one was \$300.00 to \$100.00. She said some are for nursing homes and the City no longer has these. Mayor Cusat stated there are a lot of fees that the City no longer has. He said there are a lot of stuff that is not relevant in the City. He stated the City no longer handles the health inspections. He said this was changed to be determined by the state. Mayor Cusat said according to the ordinance, the City was

charging more than the state was requesting. Barletta asked if there are used car dealerships in the ordinance. She said there is one on every block. Mayor Cusat said they are considered a business. He said this ordinance is to be changed, in this format, for the City to get the bills out next month. He stated the business license is going to be reorganized when doing the codification. He said there are five or six different business license ordinances, on the books, and is working to consolidate, all of them, into one business license ordinance. He said that is why they decided to change the Fee Scale to include everything at \$100.00. He said everything will be in unison. Mayor Cusat said once the codification is done, there will be one business license ordinance put out. He said the City needs to get the bills out as soon as possible to bring money in for January. Barletta said the bills usually go out in October. Mayor Cusat said, usually, late October or early November.

Atty. Logsdon said when the City is going into codification in 2021, if someone has an at-home E-Bay business versus someone with a grocery store, it is all the same business license. He said it is the same \$100.00 dollars and would get the sticker or certificate that they have a Hazleton business license. He said pool halls, billiard halls, and roller-skating rinks, that will not exist anymore, is not needed in the new codification. He said this is what is required to get a business license for or making money in the City.

Barletta asked under tent shows and parades if this was always in the ordinance. Mayor Cusat said this was for the circus's held in the past. She asked if this refers to parades on the streets. Mayor Cusat said they will need to "touch on this", over the winter, to have a parade and event ordinance, in place, after the budget is done. He said this is one of the important things to do because he is receiving requests for parades and events now for 2021.

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

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

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**Ordinance 2020-27**

An Ordinance Establishing a No Parking Zone on Both Sides of North Manhattan Court Between West Aspen Street and West Acacia Streets  
**(1<sup>st</sup> READING)**

Presented by Sacco. Seconded by Colombo.

**On the Question:**

Mundie asked if Police Chief Schoonmaker is okay with this. Schoonmaker said absolutely. Perry said he had called Anna Jean Muchler who requested this. He said he has driven by there, a few times, and has not seen a lot of vehicles. Muchler said it is sporadic. He said the pictures city council members received shows the cars blocking the street. He said Muchler said she had to get her own No-Parking sign to do her own work. He said Muchler owns from Laurel Street and Diamond Avenue to the alley. He said it was a Carriage House at one time. Perry said Muchler stated she cannot get any work done, on the back, because cars are parked there with one driveway in that span facing the post office. Perry stated Muchler could not get on ZOOM but told Muchler city council was looking at this. Perry said Muchler gave them good exhibits. Mayor Cusat said the only issue would be with the Ovalon Restaurant. He said the cars that cannot park there will only have a limited parking area. Perry said Muchler stated going down Acacia Street, and getting to the post office, people park all the way to the corner, and cannot get out. Mayor Cusat said this is a nightmare. Barletta said her and Sacco "hit this" in the morning and at night, and has been "tight". Perry said he does not know what is happening with the Ovalon Restaurant.

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

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

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

None

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**RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution 2020-78**

A Resolution Authorizing the Purchase of Fire Apparatus for the Hazleton City Fire Department

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Sacco.

**On the Question:**

Perry said this was “hashed out” quite a bit already. He thanked Leshko for all the numbers. Mundie said he was always for the fire department, know they need equipment, and always bought equipment. He said they have been discussing this since 2018, but he was not on council on 2018 & 2019, but came back in 2020, and discussed doing this in conjunction with refinancing. He said he thought they would do this with the savings “in hand” to buy the trucks. He said doing it now before having the money, the City is a distressed City in ACT 47, and spending \$2,500,000. Mundie said Leshko stated he will have the money unless something happens as not getting the audits and are horrible. He said then the City would not refinance, they would not get the money and have to go out and refinance. He stated the City would be in trouble. He wants to do the refinancing first and then purchase the trucks. Mundie said he is not against purchasing the trucks.

Perry said PEL stated there are certain constraints with costs. He said Leshko stated that the cost has gone up \$400,000 since 2018. He said they would never get back the better financing as back in 2018. Perry said there is good financing going on now. He said the only issues are if the bond market went “upside down” or if council did not approve the refinancing. Perry stated PEL is “on board” with this, but it is council’s decision to make.

Barletta said she knows there are two fire vehicles that need replacing now. She asked if one is a pumper and one is a ladder. Leshko said yes. She said they had a long discussion, on this, on Friday. She said as a council member, she is looking at the financial end with the risks that PEL brought to their attention if it “freezes”. She reviewed the refinancing, she looked at the numbers Hottenstein gave city council in March and how they would extend the debt to 2040 if the City refinanced the \$3,000,000. She stated Leshko only needs \$2,500,000 and looking at “other people’s” capital budgets. Barletta asked Leshko if the City would just replace the two vehicles, and not the vehicle that needs to be replaced in 2022. She asked what the difference, in pricing, would be. She said they have been talking about repairs and what pricing the City is “putting in”. She said looking at the lump sum, borrowing \$3,000,000 and with some options, the City would be borrowing \$4,000,000. She said she is looking for the City to be financially stable. Leshko asked where the City would get the money, in 2022, for the truck. Barletta said this is another risk with a

different interest rate. She asked what the City would do if the bond “freezes”. She asked if they would go to the taxpayers or go with the leasing. She stated it is a very big question. Barletta asked Leshko how he feels about replacing the two fire trucks now, and then replacing the other truck in 2022. Leshko said looking at other cities that he has gotten pricing from, this is the better deal. Leshko said the City would pay “down the road”, or save money now, which is fiscally responsible, and do it all at once. Leshko said they could “piecemeal” and buy the trucks now. He said, then, he will come back to city council, in 2022, and then council says no. He asked what would he do then. Barletta said these are options she is looking at with the numbers and a lot of projects ahead for the City. She stated they needed to be replaced years ago, and not just pushed down to “right now”. She said pricing will go up, obviously, in 2022. Leshko said the current vehicles are serviceable, but it is a “gamble he takes”, and looking at the overall City fleet, asked if the City replaces one, two, or three vehicles. He stated in 1987 when the MAC truck that was purchased, brand new, there was a layoff in the City. He said the truck had to sit there for years and could not be moved at of the station. Leshko said the fire department uses this truck, very heavy, and got their years out of it. He said in 2009 & 2010, he got a break with a grant to purchase the new ladder truck that costs \$75,000. He stated the City has not put together a capital purchase plan, of fire apparatus, since 1995. He said everything, from this point on, after the tower ladder has been purchased with Community Development money or through a grant. He said any money used for fire apparatus came out of Community Development. Leshko said with the help of the Firemen’s relief and the state grants that the volunteer companies get, the City is very fortunate. He stated the City does not have to fund the budget, in the fire department, to buy equipment. Leshko said there is not a line item, in the budget, for equipment. He said he has spoken, with other cities about this, and they would love this option. He uses this option with working with everyone together. He said in the whole financial aspect, it is best to go with buying the three vehicles.

Perry said if the City refinances with taking \$3,000,000, the City will have about \$500,000 to do other things with. Leshko said it is about at \$2,400,000 for the total price, and this could be adjusted, even more, with precon. Perry asked if he receives any grants, in the meantime, will alleviate the price even more. Leshko said he will start, next week, an application for an LSA grant, and “put in” for the whole amount. He said he encourages every department, in the City, to apply for as many grants as they could. Leshko said he will place these resolutions, in front of city council, for approval. He said he is worried, a little, because he is still waiting for 2019 LSA grants. He said he is now going to start applying for 2020 LSA grants.

Barletta said she is looking at different options and the numbers to 2040 what it would be for the City. Leshko said the one person who was “pushy” with numbers and money was the “late-great Cuozzo”. He said he appreciated and respected this. Leshko said they all need to work together. Perry asked what Leshko, would say, when people ask him if they would buy used fire vehicles. Leshko said he has spoken with a fire chief that is buying a refurbished truck. He said the cost of this is \$1,000,000. He said the chief is from a metropolitan city in the state. Leshko said he gave him a good idea. He said the truck that they are replacing is a tower ladder. Leshko said when it was purchased, it was a rear-mount tower. Leshko said he was not part of this purchase. He stated the City is now looking to purchase a mid-mount tower. He said in 20-30 years, down the road, when the truck is up for replacement, this would be a suitable truck to be refurbished, for a savings of money. He stated the current truck is not suitable for refurbishing. Perry asked if the City would, then, not get much money for the old vehicles. Leshko said the ladder truck should get about \$75,000-\$100,000 and the pumper trucks about \$10,000, each, due to the year, age, and usage. Leshko said they need to look at all the aspects, and what is best for the City. He said the City could always reject the bids. Leshko said he will be putting the resolutions, in front of city

council, to sell the old fire vehicles. Perry said they are antiques. Barletta asked Leshko about “staggering” of the vehicles, and do not “all go down” at once. Leshko said, currently, with the purchasing and the current “out gear”, this will put the City into staggering them. He said the pumpers will be staggered.

Mundie asked if the truck the City sold to the Dominican’s is still running. Leshko said yes. He said they had a major pumper issue, with it, and has been down for a while, and they had to get a part for it. Leshko said it was a pump shift mechanism. He said the City tried to get a part for them but could not get it. Leshko said they sent pictures to him. He said there was someone, down in the Dominican, to build the part for them.

Mundie suggested amending the ordinance to buy two trucks. Barletta said she would second this. She said the City is “playing with a bond” and the risk. She said she is worried about this.

Mayor Cusat asked Leshko if the quotes he received for the fire trucks was for all three vehicles. Leshko said yes. Mayor Cusat asked if there is a chance with only buying two vehicles if the discount would not be as big. Leshko said this is a possibility. Barletta asked what the discount is right now. Leshko stated the discount is very substantial with \$575,000 for the pumper and \$1,300,000. Barletta said she feels, comfortable, with two vehicles. Leshko said he is against this.

**MOTION TO AMEND:**

Presented by Mundie. Seconded by Barletta.

**Roll Call (To Amend):** Barletta-yes; Colombo-no; Mundie-yes; Sacco-no; Perry-no.

**MOTION TO AMEND FAILS 3-2**

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Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Sacco.

**Roll Call:** Barletta-no; Colombo-yes; Mundie-no; Sacco-yes; Perry-yes.

**RESOLUTION PASSES 3-2**

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**Resolution 2020-79**

A Resolution Adopting the Luzerne County 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

**On the Question:**

Mundie asked if Schoonmaker and Leshko are fine with the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Leshko said the City has gone through this before with the county. He sated Bobby Dougherty handled this before. He said the City is fine with this. Perry said Atty. Logsdon stated a lot of municipalities have passed this. He stated three other municipalities have passed this. Atty. Logsdon said the county sent him the language for this resolution.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-80**                      A Resolution Requesting Local Share Account Funds for the Hazleton Regional Airport

Presented by Colombo. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**Resolution 2020-81**                      A Resolution Permitting the City of Hazleton to Apply for a Luzerne County Local Share Account Grant for the Hazleton Active Adult Center

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Barletta.

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

**RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

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**New Business:**

None

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**Old Business:**

None

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**Comments from the Audience:** Mark Rabo, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hazleton, said he is not surprised about the vote on the Land Bank. He wanted to make some clarifications about what the mayor said about the Land Bank. Rabo said the Land Bank cannot identify and certify blighted properties under the law. He stated, under the Redevelopment law, it says that the Blighted Property Review Committee, by law, could identify and certify properties as blighted. He stated Land Banks cannot do this. Rabo said he also wanted to point this out to Mr. Lynch. He said he knows this stuff with being on the Redevelopment Authority and understands these issues better than everybody. Rabo said he dealt with blight for the past 10 years and being a contractor. He said he was a consultant to the state Blight Task Force and was there when the Land Bank law was developed. He said if this ordinance is about blight then put an amendment, in the ordinance, saying the mayor and any entity he is involved with cannot purchase properties in this Land Bank. He stated this is a conflict of interest. Rabo said he needs to purchase properties out of the Land



Bank. He said he is not stupid and no one else is either. He will call the mayor "out on this". Rabo said Elite Revenue Solutions runs the tax auctions and who is, to say, they will not run the Land Bank auctions. Rabo stated Mayor Cusat went up to the county to have the delinquent taxes collected. He said he has a vested interest in this. Rabo said this is all a "rouse" because the mayor stated he will not deal with blight if the Land Bank Ordinance is not passed. Rabo told Mayor Cusat to "grow up".

**Comments from Mayor:** Mayor Cusat asked if anyone else wants to accuse him of ethics violations or insider trading. He said he knows how to get properties donated with a 501-C3 that has had properties, donated to the City, for tax sale. He said he does understand the process. He said he is not looking for ethics violations or to go to jail for a property he could buy, himself, at a tax sale, for nothing. Mayor Cusat stated there is someone, in the audience, that has been on several boards and has quit everyone he was on. He said to say he is an expert; why anyone would agree to this.

Mayor Cusat welcomed the students with the good meeting discussing bonds, financing, purchasing and a lot of "other stuff".

Mayor Cusat reminded all that safe Trick-or-Treating is Saturday with extra police and fire patrols. He said they will be, on the streets, to make sure children are safe, while walking. He said there will be a Trunk-or-Treat event, at City View Park, on Sunday from 4:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m. He hopes to see everyone there. He told everyone to "be safe".

Leshko thanked Mayor Cusat, Dan Lynch, and all city council members for their support of the Hazleton City Fire Department. He said the men and women, of the Hazleton Fire Department, do an excellent job, and cannot be prouder of their job every day. Leshko said he will have resolutions, in front of city council, by the next meeting, for LSA grants. He said everyone working together is, "one team, one family".

**Comments from City Administrator:** None.

**Comments from Council:** Mundie wished the Land Bank success in cleaning up the City. He said he is for it and was never against it. He said he hopes it gets "off the ground". Mundie said he always supported and voted for fire equipment for the department. He said he feels the City should do the refinancing first, especially in ACT 47, and understands were PEL is "coming from" with the City being distressed. He said if the coronavirus extends into the winter and next year, there will be deficits everywhere. Mundie said the cities and states will be under pressure.

He wished everyone Happy Halloween. Mundie reminded all to vote on November 3, 2020. He said, "your voice counts". He said 62,000,000 people have already voted with 1,200,000 Democrats and 3,335,000 having already voted in PA.

Barletta welcomed all Junior Council members. She thanked them for all their input. Barletta said regarding the Land Bank, she was 80% going "into it", but is great for the City. She said she reviewed all the suggestions from the consultant, but looking into it with the 12 weeks deadline, if the City could have this with a strong board, the City will have progress and the residents will be happy if used the correct way. She said regarding the business license, she suggested, in the past, for businesses getting a red sticker, on their doors or windows, and getting different colors, for each year. She said it will tell the City who is a legal business. Mayor Cusat said he has ordered the stickers already. He got them for Tino for his home inspections papers. He has talked about it and will get it for the fire and business licenses. Barletta asked if these would be replaced every year. Mayor Cusat said yes. He said the City would not need to go into the businesses to see if they have a license. Barletta said this is a real good idea. She asked what the cost is for the stickers. Mayor Cusat stated they cost about 25 cents each.

Barletta stated she supports the Hazleton Fire Department with the purchasing of fire trucks. She said she looked at it as a “high risk” with the pandemic. She would have felt, more comfortable, replacing two vehicles and not replacing the one truck due in 2022. Barletta said she would rather refinance more of the City’s debt to get financially stable. She looks forward to the new fire trucks coming and wished him the best.

Barletta wished everyone a Happy Halloween. She said hopes to see everyone at Trunk-or-Treat on Sunday.

Sacco said the City needs to come up with a code of conduct, and what they expect of a citizen, who enters the community. She said they could show them the process with the code department, i.e.- phase one, phase two deadlines. She said this would alleviate the telephone calls for city council members and Pedri. Sacco said this could be shared on the city council’s internet page. She stated Gary Perna is very good with finesse, web sites, and social media. She said they need to come up with this and taking all the unnecessary steps out. She said she has no problem sharing this. Sacco stated she is all for the items that were discussed tonight.

Sacco wished everyone Happy Halloween.

Colombo welcomed all the new Junior Council members, and much is appreciative they are finally participating. He said he is all for everything discussed tonight. Colombo said the City’s clean-up is continuing and they are working as a team. He wished everyone a Happy Halloween with Saturday and Sunday’s Trunk-or-Treat at the Dog Park. He said it has been a great event in the past. He reminded all to continue social distancing and masks. Colombo said they continue to move forward safely.

Perry stated this is how city council works things out. He said they agree, disagree, and work with the departments. He said they all have the same goal, and they all pay taxes. Perry said it is not a political thing and they work through it. He stated they want the City to be the best it could be. Perry stated it takes time. He thanked the new Junior Council members for participating and seeing how democracy and the Third-Class City government works. He said the discussions are done civilly. He thanked all City department managers for being here and helping out. Perry stated we are all here for the same reason.

**Comments from Junior Council:** Jeffery DeAngelo said it was an interesting meeting and will be sure to attend the next one. Jillian McGeehin stated the main priority, with the county going “into red” should be COVID, and kids not going to school. She said the Trunk-or-Treat is not the best thing to do going into the “red phase”.

**Adjournment:** Perry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.