

**MINUTES
HAZLETON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025**

Call to Order: Council met in a Regular Meeting session on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 in Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 6:22 p.m.

Silent Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance: A silent moment was taken followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Bruno-present; Colombo-present; Nilles-present; Ondishin-present; Perry-present

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the March 25, 2025, 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)

Ordinance 2025-3 An Ordinance Establishing a No Parking Zone on the East Side of Lafayette Court Between West 2nd & West 3rd Streets **(1st READING)**

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Colombo.

On the Question:

Mayor Cusat stated according to Title 67, the City has the right to make No Parking Zones anywhere if a street is not 18 feet wide. He said this would take care of all the problems with the fire and snowplow trucks in the City. He said it would be enforceable by the police. Ondishin asked once the ordinance is, in place, does the City not have to erect any signs. Mayor Cusat said yes. Mayor Cusat said, in the last 21 years, there have been three alleys that No Parking was sought. Ondishin asked if the City code officers could enforce this ordinance. Mayor Cusat said no. He stated code and zoning officers could only enforce a law on private property. Perry stated this is a "blanket" ordinance.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

ORDINANCE PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

(2ND READINGS)

None

RESOLUTIONS:

RESOLUTION 2025-12

Appointment to the Recreational Vehicle Board of Appeals

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

Ondishin nominated Harry Hinkle. Perry seconded this nomination.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2025-13

Appointment to the Sewer Authority

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Nilles.

Colombo nominated Ted Sherrock. Ondishin seconded the nomination.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Resolution 2025-14

Appointment to the Hazleton City Water Authority

Presented by Ondishin. Seconded by Perry.

1. Colombo nominates Robert Schnee.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-no; Ondishin-no; Perry-no.

NOMINATION FOR ROBERT SCHNEE FAILS 3-2

2. Ondishin nominates John Keegan.

Roll Call: Bruno-no; Colombo-no; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

NOMINATION FOR JOHN KEEGAN PASSES 3-2

RESOLUTION PASSES 3-2

Resolution 2025-15

Approving the Sister Cities International Partnership Agreement between the City of Hazleton (U.S.A.) and San Jose De Ocoa (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC)

Presented by Perry. Seconded by Ondishin.

On the Question:

Molly Blasko, President for the Hazleton City Sister Cities, Inc., said they have served this City, as a community liaison, in Poland, for seven years, and communities in Italy. Mostly, the Sister City is a general community of over 40 communities. She said they have done a lot to enhance the City with trips to Italy. Blasko said she does not see the reason for having a second Sister City. She stated the Hazleton Sister Cities have been incorporated since 1993. Ondishin asked if the City would have, a second Sister City, would this interfere with anything. Blasko said they would not be part of the Hazleton Sister Cities Authority. Blasko said she does not know what motivated the mayor to do this.

Perry said several cities have multiple Sister Cities. He stated with a large Hispanic community, this would benefit them in working with their ancestry.

Mayor Cusat said in 2017 when the City was going “back and forth” with fire engines and fire equipment, the City sent to the Dominican Republic the City’s outdated fire trucks and fire equipment. He said there are a total of 9 fire trucks sent to the Dominican Republic.

Perry read the agreement the City would have with San Jose De Ocoa (Dominican Republic). He said this is a perfect opportunity to work together with another country. Nilles said the “fire service” has a way of “bonding” people together. He stated Brian Mandak, Hazleton Deputy Fire Chief, got involved with several City fire fighters going to the Dominican Republic to train them. He said it was a good opportunity for them to use the equipment when a hurricane or disaster hits to put out their fires.

Ramon Ocastio, Organizer of the Sister Cities project, said this is a heartfelt effort to strengthen cultural ties, promote economic growth, and build a meaningful relationship with the two communities. He said this would celebrate the heritage of many of the City residents. He said this would encourage cultural exchange, educational programs, and small business engagement that would benefit both cities. Ocastio asked for the City’s support to “build a bridge” that would unite the two cities.

Amlicar Arroyo, Hazleton, said he has lived in the City the past 36 years. He said Blasko's comments surprised him. He said when he moved to the City, he always felt he was welcome here. Arroyo said he became good friends with former mayor Joseph Yannuzzi. He said with the increasing of people of San Jose De Ocoa, he asked Yannuzzi if the City could be Sister Cities with them. He said this was the beginning of the relationship. He said every "Hazletonian" would benefit from this.

Rossanna Gabriel, Hazleton, said she appreciated this resolution. She said the City will understand the people and culture. Gabriel said this is a good step for understanding their culture and establishing a good relationship between the two cities.

David Dominguez, Hazleton, said he is a Hazleton High School teacher, living in the City since 2005. He wholeheartedly supports the Sister City project. Dominguez said it takes a lot of community building to establish business and educational ties.

Roll Call: Bruno-yes; Colombo-yes; Nilles-yes; Ondishin-yes; Perry-yes

RESOLUTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

New Business: None.

Old Business: None.

Comments from the Audience: Ted Sherrock, Hazleton, thanked City Council for re-appointing him to the Hazleton Sewer Authority. He said City Council could be proud of this authority, and work in harmony to consider the City sewer rate payer. He thanked Fire Chief Don Leshko for giving the Hazleton Sewer Authority safety factors. He said there are a lot of negative comments at the City Council meetings. He said the City Council and City administration are doing a good job.

Perry asked how many Sewer Authority board members there are. Sherrock said there are a total of nine members.

Dee Deakos, 43 Mine Street, Hazleton, congratulated the Tulip Day project. She said she noticed a lot of people standing at the intersection waiting for traffic walk signal. She said, unfortunately, there was a lot of "J-walking" done. She asked why something is not being done. Deakos said someone is going to get hurt. Ondishin asked Deakos to send him an email if the traffic signal has not been fixed.

Mayor Cusat said there is something wrong with the traffic wiring. Colombo said, in the past, the City and state have been both working on this issue. He said this issue was forwarded to Mr. Vito in the DPW Department.

Comments from Mayor: Mayor Cusat said Tulip Day was much more than he expected. He said all 50,000 flowers were gone by 2:45 p.m. He said City administration had a meeting to discuss issues that happened during the event to prevent them in the future.

Mayor Cusat stated the Easter Bunny Trail will be held on April 13th at City View Park.

Mayor Cusat wished everyone a Happy Easter.

Comments from City Administrator: Lynch said the City auditors are optimistic for finishing the City draft audit soon. Lynch said he spoke to the City's financial advisor if the City would need to take out a bond for paving roads in the City.

Comments from Council: Nilles thanked DPW for filling street potholes. He said a lot of the roads, on the northside, have "heaved" up.

Nilles suggested the Bunny Trail and Tulip Day be done all in one day. Mayor Cusat said the City cannot put 6,000 people in "one spot". Mayor Cusat stated Broad and Laurel Streets are hard to "close" for City events.

Nilles sent his condolences to the family of Charlie Brogan, former City Vector employee.

Nilles stated the Club 40 and Stockton Road will be closed for road work for a while.

Colombo said keeping Tulip Day at CAN DO Park is important for downtown.

Colombo said April 16th will be the Easter meal distribution day for shut ins.

Colombo commended the City Fire Department for the recent fire on Broad Street. He, also thanked DPW Department for all their road work. He stated all City departments are doing a great job. Colombo thanked Van Hoekelen nurseries for a great Tulip Day.

Ondishin asked all City citizens to help pick up trash they see on the streets. He said the City residents need to stop complaining about the garbage. Colombo said Earth Day is coming up, and the residents are welcome to get groups, and CAN DO will have bags and gloves for the event.

Ondishin asked Mayor Cusat how much longer the Buttonwood Street project will take. Mayor Cusat said they are connecting the "laterals", and the City is at the "mercy" of the contractors.

Ondishin asked Mayor Cusat if Broad Street will be repaved. Mayor Cusat said it is on the PENN DOT list.

Perry thanked the Sister City committee. He thanked Van Hoekelen for providing all the tulips for Tulip Day. He stated San Francisco, New York and Hazleton are the only cities who sponsored this event. He, also, thanked Mayor Cusat's Foundation.

Perry wished everyone a Happy Easter.

Comments from Junior Council: None

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

