

City of Hazleton Government Study Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Time 6:00 PM

Location: Hazleton City Hall in Council Chambers

Call to Order

This meeting was called to order at 6:00PM by Allison Keegan, Chairwoman

Roll Call

Allison Keegan, Chairperson -Present

Rossanna Gabriel, Vice Chairperson - Present

Philip Bonafair - Absent

Thomas Bruno – Absent

Jeffrey Cusat – Present

Joseph Yannuzzi –Present

Joseph Zeller III –Present

PEL Consultants Gerald Cross; Senior Research Fellow; Patty Moorhead, Director of Financial and Data Analytics; Fred Reddig, Consultant

Solicitor Sean Logsdon

Recording Secretary Christine Galuska

Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and moment of silence was observed.

Approval of Minutes

Approval of July 1, 2026, meeting minutes. Motion made by Cusat, seconded by Yannuzzi.

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Invoices None

Courtesy of the Floor (On Agenda Items Only) None

New Business

PEL Consultants distributed a summary of the proposed Home Rule Charter articles titled “A Citizen’s Guide to the Charter: Understanding Hazleton’s Proposed Home Rule Charter” to all individuals attending the meeting. The summary was written in both English and Spanish.

The Commission’s Solicitor Sean Logsdon presented a slideshow of “Understanding Hazleton’s Proposed Home Rule Charter.” During the presentation, the Solicitor provided an overview of the proposed Home Rule Charter and briefly explained the purpose and function of each article and how each article would work if adopted. The public was invited to ask any questions or provide comments regarding the proposed Home Rule Charter.

Public Comments Regarding the Understanding of Hazleton's Proposed Home Rule Charter

David Dominguez thanked the Commissioners for their work and efforts throughout the Home Rule Charter process. He asked what the reasons are for residents to support and vote in favor of the proposed Charter. David shared that he was initially inclined to vote against the proposal but believes there is a strong case to be made for its adoption. He noted potential benefits, including opportunities for tax restructuring that could provide relief to residents, particularly those on fixed incomes. He emphasized that, ultimately, the citizens will make the final decision when they cast their votes on the ballot. David provided his comments in Spanish.

Council President Jim Perry thanked the Commissioners for their hard work on the proposed Home Rule Charter. He stated that he believes a change in the City's form of government is needed, noting that has been many years since significant changes have been made. He commented that the City and the way government operates have evolved over time, making it necessary to modernize the governing structure. Jim also stated that he believes the Home Rule Charter will provide greater flexibility in the use of tax revenue to better benefit the citizens of Hazleton. He emphasized the importance of educating residents on the provisions and impacts of the proposed Charter.

Member Comments Regarding the Understanding of Hazleton's Proposed Home Rule Charter

Hazleton Government Study Commission Vice-Chairwoman Rossanna Gabriel addressed the public in Spanish, encouraging residents to work together and not be afraid to ask questions regarding the proposed Home Rule Charter. She offered to provide explanations in Spanish to assist members of the community in understanding the Charter. Commissioner Gabriel encouraged the Latino community to become informed and take an interest in the proposed Charter process. She also provided the comments in English.

Hazleton Government Study Commission Chairwoman Allison Keegan stated that the draft of the proposed Home Rule Charter is available on the City's website in both English and Spanish for public review. She also stated that a contact email has been provided on the website for residents to submit any questions and/or comments regarding the proposed charter.

Old Business

PEL Consultants reviewed the next steps in the Home Rule Charter process with the Commissioners. The proposed timeline includes submission of the Charter by August 4, 2026, followed by a public outreach period from September through November 2026. The final date to amend the proposed Charter is September 1, 2026. The Home Rule Charter referendum will be placed on the ballot for Election Day, November 3, 2026. If approved by the voters, the new Charter would take effect on January 1, 2027, with transition phased in through 2029.

An additional meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 29, to discuss the citizens' comments and questions regarding the proposed Home Rule Charter. The Government Study Commission will review the feedback received and continue its discussion of the proposed charter.

Public Comments None

Member Comments None

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:48 PM by Zeller, seconded by Yannuzzi. The motion carries.

Next Meeting

The Hazleton Government Study Commission Public Hearing meeting will take place on Wednesday, July 29, 2026 at 5:00 PM, on the 2nd floor in Conference Room A.