

Minutes of the Council of the City of Easton, Pa.

November 8, 2023

Easton, Pa
Wednesday
November 8, 2023
6:00 p.m.

City Council met in stated session at the above date and time, in Council Chambers, located on the Third Floor of City Hall, 123 S. Third Street, to consider any business that may lawfully be brought before the body.

The invocation was given by Mayor Panto, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Brown, Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto (7)

Absent: None (0)

Also, participating in the meeting were Rita M. Messa, City Clerk, Luis Campos, City Administrator, Joel Scheer, City Solicitor and Jeremy Clark, Asst. City Solicitor and Joel Scheer, City Solicitor. At the beginning of the meeting there were sixty-six (66) other participants present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda was approved on motion of Mr. O'Connell seconded by Dr. Ruggles by the following vote:

Before the vote was taken, Mayor Panto stated that he would not be pulling the Resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine from the agenda.

The Agenda was then approved by the following vote:

Yeas: Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown (7)

Nays: None (0)

ACTION ON THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. O'Connell seconded by Mr. Brown to approve the October 25, 2023 minutes. The minutes were approved by the following vote.

Yeas: Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger (7)

Nays: None (0)

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PROMOTION IN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mayor Panto stated that he was very proud of the officers in the Fire Department as well as all the Firefighters and proud to be promoting Mr. Terrance Hand to the rank of Captain.

Mayor Panto then administered the Oath of Office to Captain Hand.

Chief Hennings then gave Council a brief background on Terrance Hand's history with the Easton Fire Department. Chief Hennings stated that Captain Hand joined the Easton Fire Department on September 17, 2001, he was promoted to Lieutenant on April 20, 2022 and was now promoted to the rank of Captain on October 16, 2023.

STATEMENT BY COUNCILMAN DR. RUGGLES

At this time Councilman Dr. Ruggles read a statement into the record (copy attached hereto) in response to Councilwoman Sultana's comments at the previous Council Meeting.

Mrs. Sultana then addressed Dr. Ruggles regarding this matter. She stated that she does have respect for Dr. Ruggles and for his service. She stated that she did not mean to disrespect or insult him - whatever was said was said because of everything that was being discussed at that time. She stated that she will always respect him and his service and that will not change.

Mayor Panto stated that Mrs. Sultana posted false information on social media, see below.

"It is unfortunate that Mayor Panto, who is going to serve his sixth term in office, has falsified to the media about my positions on the committees. I have been the chairperson of the Planning and Codes Committee and have held many meetings when needed. However, I do not serve on the Zoning Board or the Historic District Commission."

Mayor Panto stated that he said that Mrs. Sultana, has yet to attend any Planning Commission Meetings, Zoning Hearing Board Meetings or Historic District Commission meeting, to which Mrs. Sultana is Chair. It has been brought up at many Planning Commission meetings that it would be nice if Mrs. Sultana would attend these meetings like Mr. O'Connell did when he was Chair.

Mayor Panto continued to speak on this matter.

Mrs. Sultana then stated that she stands by her statement as she is not a Board member for Zoning, or Historic District Commission. There was some further discussion on this topic.

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Mr. Dan Cohen sent a letter to all of Council regarding the proposed ceasefire Resolution – at this time Mr. Brown read that letter into the record (copy attached hereto).

Mayor Panto stated that he also has received correspondence from Mr. Bernie O’Hare and Linda Scheer regarding this matter.

Mrs. Sultana stated that whoever wrote this letter mentioned Hamas several times and connecting Palestine to Hamas is not fair.

Mayor Panto stated Mrs. Sultanas Resolution never mentioned Hamas, Council, not one time, referenced Palestine – everything referenced was Hamas.

Mayor Panto stated that Council does care about children that are being killed on both sides.

A lengthy discussion continued on this topic.

Mr. O’Connell stated that he will not be supporting this Resolution as the City of Easton does not have a State Department – and this is way beyond Council’s legislative scope.

Mr. O’Connell stated that the best thing to do would be for everyone who wants this Resolution to pass is to contact Congresswoman Wild, Senators Fetterman and Casey directly.

Mr. O’Connell also stated that he believes this proposed Resolution is very one sided and any Resolution asking for a ceasefire really needs to mention that Israel has a right to defend itself and its borders and needs to recognize that Hamas is a terrorist organization.

Mr. O’Connell also stated that Council’s only focus should be taking care of City matters.

Before the public comment started, Mayor Panto said that the five (5) minute rule that Council previously established will apply to all public comments.

Mrs. Sultana stated that, with this Resolution, Council would not be creating or amending any laws and other cities have passed similar Resolutions all calling for a ceasefire.

Mrs. Sultana continued to speak on this matter.

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Mr. Scheer explained that a Resolution is City Council speaking as the representatives for the residents of the City of Easton and then will have to decide if this is appropriate for city business.

Mr. Edinger stated that he would also be voting no for this Resolution as he has been receiving many emails opposing this Resolution.

Mayor Panto stated that the City has real issues that Council needs to deal with. A discussion continued on this matter.

PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Yaseen Saleh, Lafayette College addressed Council by stating that he hears everyone's concern regarding this matter and he also hears Dr. Ruggles passion in his statement about all of the work that he has done. He stated that humanity is important and asked that everyone listen regarding this issue as a lot the anger is a deep cry for humanity. Mr. Saleh continued to speak on this topic.

Anika Vuiya, 142 Clover Hollow Road stated to Council that there is a lot of irony in listening to Council talking about civil disobedience while also saying that anyone exercising their civil rights is toothless – Council needs to have some humility. Council is not listening and Council's moral virtue does not condone Council not knowing enough about these things.

She stated the United States has funded billions of dollars to fund the bombing of children and the oldest church in the world among others and asked how Council could condone these actions and stated that Council are servants of the public. She cannot believe that they have to beg Council for humanity.

Ms. Vuiya continued to address council on this matter.

Mayor Panto asked Ms. Vuiya, since she lives in Forks Township, if she went to Forks Township to ask their Supervisors to pass this Resolution. She asked why that would matter, she is just exercising her civil liberties by coming to Easton.

A "heated" discussion continued on this matter.

Mr. Aaron Gorodzinsky, 245 Cedar Park Blvd stated that he was here previously when a resolution was passed condemning antisemitism and islamophobia, which actually made a difference to many residents of the City which made it a safer environment.

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This proposed Resolution means nothing at the city level, it belongs in the national level. This is a waste of time to discuss this at a city level.

Mr. Gorodzinsky continued to speak on this matter.

Mrs. Sultana stated that we work with Congress so it is all one government – just different steps and bringing up these issues is saying all lives matter.

Gazel Jabir, 117 N. Ott Street, Allentown, Pa. stated that she is in medicine, born here and attended school in upstate New York. She would like to establish some common ground stating that all Palestinian lives and children are equal to that of Israel and America. Religious beliefs do not decrease their value of life.

She would not allow for our any child/civilian to be sacrificed for any reason. Many Palestinian children have been killed without the comfort of their families. Israels right to defend themselves has exceeded all reasonable bounds of war. Bodies are buried in mass graves and buried under rubble. When a community comes together there is no waste of time. Best changes originated in smaller governments.

Ms. Jabir continued to speak on this matter.

Ari Ismail, Lafayette College thanked Council for their time but stated that this may not be an issue for most of Council since she assumes that most of Council were born and raised here. She stated that she was born here but moved when she was a baby. At 2 yrs. old she remembers bombs, airstrikes and floors shaking daily during a war. She stated that she had the privilege to leave that area and come to the United States. People within Easton and the Lehigh Valley who are Jewish, Palestinian and Muslim who are fearing for their lives and their families lives back home.

Ms. Ismail stated that everyone deserves humanity. It is scary of what Hamas can do as well as what Israel can do. Council has power and everyone here is using their voices. She has called Susan Wild and the other representatives but needs City level pressure for a ceasefire. Everyone is begging for an end to the violence.

Ms. Ismail continued to speak on this matter.

Mr. Robert Wax, 702 N. 22nd Street, Allentown, Pa stated that he spent a lot of time in Easton as a kid and is coming here as the President of the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley representing all three cities across the valley and other municipalities. Spoke about babies being

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burned/decapitated, women being raped, savage murders and people, some who are holocaust survivors, are still be held hostage.

Mr. Wax stated that deaths on both sides are a travesty. This is a very complex issue. He stated that when we talk about Hamas and separating them from the Palestinian people, we cannot forget the Palestinian authority and Hamas together pay families of terrorists to murder innocent Israelis. They are even paid a monthly stipend and a success bonus to terrorist.

Mr. Wax continued to speak on this topic.

Ms. Laurel Yarrow, 121 S. 5th Street stated to Council that coming to Council is how voices are heard. As a City, we can say that this is morally wrong. If you read the history, she stated that Israel has been eating away at Palestine by bombing them over and over and the United States does nothing to stop it. This has happened repeatedly. While there is extremist on both sides, what Israel is doing to Palestine she likens this to what the Nazi's have done to the Jewish people. No one sticks up for Palestine. She stated that the United States has been funding billions of dollars, per year, to Israel. She stated that our interest is to maintain our base in the middle east. The politicians need to stand up to this and be fundamentally moral.

Ms. Yarrow continued to speak on this matter.

Raya Avdelaal, 371 Park Ave., Bethlehem stated that her family does business in Easton and employs Easton people so imagine what her family would think about Council not supporting this ceasefire. The ceasefire will not only help the Palestinians but the hostages as well. She asked how the hostages would get out safely if Israel is bombing over and over again.

She is tired of all of the lies about her people. America goes into countries, takes their resources and funds militaries that destroy us.

At this time, Ms. Aydelaal showed pictures to Council.

Ms. Aydelaal stated, if the Resolution calling for a ceasefire is not passed, she and her people will take their business elsewhere. Thousands of people marched from the Lehigh Valley and we keep getting more supporters.

She has gone to the Congressman Susan Wild and if Council would set an example of what good leadership is, they will follow.

Ms. Aydelaal continued to speak on this matter.

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An-Nisa Muqtadir, 237 E. Wilkes Barre Street. She addressed Mayor Panto directly, however, she told the other Councilmembers and incumbent Councilmembers to “please take note”.

She stated that at the previous meeting, Mrs. Sultana was asked to adjust her Resolution. Mrs. Sultana then made adjustments to her original Resolution but Mayor Panto still says that this issue is essentially above Council’s paygrade - but why, Mayor Panto, did you have your own Resolution in a better format?

She stated that deaths in Palestine have doubled not counting the bodies still under the rubble. Violence has gotten worse in Gaza and the West Bank – mind you, the West Bank has no Hamas since Council is so directly focused on Hamas.

There have been two (2) complete blackouts due to attacks. They have seen the disgraceful, President Biden promise aid to Israel with outrageous numbers.

Palestinians have no clean water, are shaving their heads due to infectious diseases. People are dying in the hospital due to the lack of clean water.

Richmond City Council passed a similar Resolution so Councils excuse for not passing this Resolution is destructive and cowardly.

She stated that Council has more access to representatives than the common residents do, however, we have continued to call those representatives daily and have not received any phone calls back or any responses to their emails. As a resident, she stated that she was disappointed and disgusted that this Council will not support Mrs. Sultana’s Resolution.

She stated to Mayor Panto that after serving five terms as Mayor, it would be a shame if you were to leave office with blood on your hands and the same for Council since they choose to be silent.

She also stated that they condemn the thousands loss of lives by the genocide. From the Rivers to the Seas Palestine will be free and she hopes that Council will choose to be on the right side of humanity. However, know this, we will keep showing up and our voices will become louder and everyone is very familiar with just how loud her voice is – much louder than Councils.

Mr. Jon Irons, 1204 W. Market St., Bethlehem, Pa. thanks Council for the opportunity to speak. One of the reasons he is speaking today is because some people were unable to come and express their voices in a forum such as this. As some feel that they are not being listened to. He has

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called Susan Wild, John Fetterman and Bob Casey and no one is listening to us. Someone needs to listen to them.

Mr. Irons continued by stating that half a million people showed up in Washington D. C. and no one is listening. Congress is censoring the people who want a ceasefire. We are not living in an undemocratic time. Furthermore Arab Americans, Palestinian Americans and Muslim Americans are underrepresented, even though they are a huge part of your constituents and this constituents are fortunate to have Mrs. Sultana.

Mr. Irons believes in “ground up” governing as well as “ground up” organizing. No one is free until Palestine is free. He also stated that our tax dollars are being used against their will to fund something that is killing innocent civilians.

Mr. Irons continued to speak on this matter and asked Council to reconsider voting for this Resolution.

Pastor Susan Ruggles, 1160 W. Lafayette Street, thanked so many who spoke at this meeting. She stated that she went back to read the Resolution and two weeks ago she did not agree with it.

Pastor Ruggles continued by stating that what people are talking about has very little to do with the Resolution itself. Mostly everyone who is here would agree that people have died and what is happening is a travesty.

At this time, Mrs. Sultana read her amended Resolution for Pastor Ruggles.

Pastor Ruggles stated that the U.N., at the end of October said, “let’s stop this”, however, nothing happened.

Pastor Ruggles also stated that what she hasn’t appreciated at all is the way some of the people in the audience have made fun of other people, or saying things to Council, who put in their time, twice a month to be here when the audience is not. She really doesn’t appreciate that, as a person of peace, listening to someone in the audience continuing to make comments about anyone who has a difference of opinion. She also stated that she doesn’t see anything wrong with just saying let’s do a ceasefire.

Pastor Ruggles briefly continued to speak on this matter.

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Mr. Howard Nathanson, 6 Cog Circle, Easton, Pa. asked Mrs. Sultana, if the Resolution that she read for Pastor Ruggles was the current Resolution? Mrs. Sultana stated that, yes, it was the amended Resolution.

Mr. Howard Nathanson stated that he and his congregation are very upset with what is going on in the Middle East and he and his congregation are praying for peace every single day. They do not take joy in the deaths of anyone including their enemies. He wishes everyone could live in peace.

Mr. Nathanson stated that he would like Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Christians and everyone else to work together.

Mr. Nathanson thanked Mrs. Sultana for amending this Resolution and sees no reason why we can't just say "Let's have a ceasefire" even though he agrees that this is not the business of the City but since it is a simple Resolution he would support that.

Mr. Robert Brent, 522 Iron Street, Easton, Pa. stated that he was going to ask Mrs. Sultana to read her amended Resolution and he is still hearing the Council say that they don't support it – how can Council pass a vote without even hearing the first speaker – that is disappointing. He continued by stating that either Council is humanitarian or not.

Mr. Brent stated that the amended Resolution has very little to disagree with.

Mr. Brent continued to speak on this topic.

Mr. Yusuf Rios, 2100 Industrial Drive, Bethlehem, Pa., stated that he is at this meeting as a religious leader and serves the Easton community periodically. He stated that we have seen, through decades of war, millions of people die in war.

Mr. Rios stated that just a few months ago, our government stated that there were no funds and the government was going to shut down – this would have impacted senior citizens, schools, people's job – however, out the blue, the government has billions of dollars for war.

He asked why there was no fact finding on what is really happening before the use of taxpayer's money was going to fund this war. He also said that if the issue is Hamas why doesn't our special forces go get Hamas instead of bombing the Palestinian people. This is happening day after day and this will possibly start another war which could splinter this country.

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Why are federal funds being used for war instead of coming into the City of Easton or Pennsylvania to help senior citizens. He stated that we are allowing Israel to bomb children with taxpayers' money. Councils' consciousness will go down in history where you stood on the taking of life – stand on the right side of History.

He stated that he will make sure that their voices are heard at the election box. He continued to speak on this matter.

Ms. Vicki Wax, 702 N. 22nd Street, Allentown, Pa. She stated that she is here and cannot believe what she is listening to. Firstly, this Resolution has no place in City government. Secondly, for Palestinians to be free, it means Hamas has to be removed from the face of the earth and the only way that will happen is when everyone agrees that this has to happen. On October 7, 2023, Hamas took innocent people from their beds, they took babies, put them in ovens and had their mothers watch them burn, raped woman and took videos of this happening - and are proud. The only way that there will be peace in the Middle East and Gaza is to get rid of Hamas and if everyone would stand up, join together to get rid of Hamas there could be freedom for the Palestinian people. They deserve freedom, they deserve education but this will not happen as long as Hamas exists.

Ms. Was continued by stating the Hamas's charter says that they only exist to end the lives of Jews everywhere in this world. She will not sit here silently and listen to the comments coming from people, many of whom, have never been anywhere near the Middle East or Israel. She also stated that she was sorry that Council had to listen to all of this from many people who have absolutely no idea what they are talking about.

Ms. Wax continued to speak briefly on this matter.

Mr. Muhammad Nadeen Qayyum, 227 Vista Drive, Easton, Pa. stated that no one has a license to kill innocent people. Resolutions are not law; they are expressions and sentiment of the people of the community.

Mr. Qayyum stated that when Israelian citizens are being killed it is called genocide.

Mr. Qayyum also stated that the U.S. Constitutions equal rights are for all citizens and Israel treats all non-Jewish people as 2nd class citizens.

Mr. Qayyum continued to speak on this matter.

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Ms. Valerie Noonan, 2050 West Gate Drive, Bethlehem, Pa. stated that she never intended to speak tonight but after hearing all of the discussion she decided that she needed to speak. She is a member of Lehigh Valley Food not Bombs. When this group, which has many chapters around the world, was founded – the question was why is there money for bombs but not food. This group started to show up in their neighborhoods to feed people.

Ms. Noonan stated that she comes to the Farmer's Market to pick up donations, working with churches and non-profits to feed people.

Ms. Noonan stated that any change needs to come from the grass roots level and the Palestinian people will benefit from the Resolution. Israel has a P.R. problem that's why they don't like people talking about it. She continued to speak on this matter.

The public has become more aware then ever about what is happening in Palestine so by simply apply pressure, at the local level, maybe we can pressure the U.S. Government to withdrawal their support of Israel. If this Resolution is passed it will say that we know right from wrong.

She continued to state that she was grateful to everyone who spoke on this matter. She briefly continued to speak on this matter.

Ms. Shalah Ramandan, 11365 Topler Dr., Coplay, Pa., started out by saying "In the name of God" and "Peace". She is an American Palestinian, Muslim, Arab – she was born in the United States and her roots are Palestinian. The history of Palestine prior to occupation – there are so many facts, news outlets that are true.

This issue with the "occupation, which started 75 years ago with the hopes that this will not continue to be an issue. We are here today addressing the ceasefire which is about innocent lives. She has described it as a domestic abuse situation.

The Palestinian civilians just need to be able to breath. We are here today to look into the kindness of your heart and say stop – while this may not solve the issue, but today she is asking all of Council to think about all of the innocent civilians on both sides. There is a civil war going on in Israel because some of the civilians have seen the death tolls and unfair treatment within their own area. They are against the death of innocent lives. Please pass this Resolution because, yes, Council's voices matter and your voices will stand for humanity. She would like to Easton be the start and a leader in taking the ceasefire.

Ms. Ramandan continued to speak on this matter.

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Ms. Laurel Yarrow again addressed Council by stating that more civilians have been killed in the 1st thirty (30) days than over nineteen (19) months of the bombing in Ukraine by Russia.

Mr. Brown asked Mr. Scheer about whether Council is speaking for the citizens of Easton if this Resolution is passed.

Mr. Scheer stated that his understating of Representative Government means you speak for your constituents and it would be responsible Government to at least know that what you are speaking for your citizens that you know what the population and the parameters. Council would need to have a full comprehensive to know, including people that are not present at the meeting, their beliefs on these issues.

Mr. Scheer continued to address Mr. Browns question.

Mrs. Sultana stated that Congress passed a Resolution combating Islamophobia worldwide, as well as human rights in China. Mr. Scheer stated that the Federal Government deals with world issues.

Mayor Panto stated that he is not as verse as he would like to be to combat some of the misrepresentation of the facts. People spoke, and there were things that were said that just weren't true or at least what he knows that are not true.

Mayor Panto stated that the reason why he is against this Resolution is because there is nothing in it that is against Hamas and doesn't believe that it should even be on our agenda as it has nothing to do with any rights of the residents of the City of Easton. He also stated that it doesn't mention Ukraine or the other twenty-six atrocities that are happening around the world. Mayor Panto stated that he is upset that we are going into a holiday season which all the major religions have a holiday and since he has been Mayor, we have always taken the position that any whoever wants to have a religious service in the Circle can do that. He is very concerned that the amount of tension that is being created by this Resolution has brought strife into the City and this may expand to something more than rhetoric of coming up to the podium to speak.

Mayor Panto also stated that he believes "our" job is Public Safety and I see every time this is on the agenda, it is allowing the community to become more divided and that is scary to him as he does not want anyone getting hurt on his watch.

Mayor Panto also stated that he spoke at Lafayette College and a Professor stopped to speak with him, telling him that both Palestinian and Jewish students are afraid to walk out on campus by

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themselves because they have been threatened. This kind of anger and emotion at our meetings spills out into the community as a whole and he just doesn't believe that this has any business on our agenda.

Mayor Panto stated that the 500,000 people that went to Washington – that's where they belong.

Mayor Panto continued to speak briefly on this matter.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved on motion of Mr. O'Connell seconded by Dr. Ruggles by the following vote:

Bill No. 37 (Ord. 5841) – Amending Section 475-15 of Chapter 475 - Sewers
Resolution 165-2023 – Appointing Michael Brett as the City's Fair Housing Officer
Resolution 166-2023 – Approving contract w/Holland Company for Sodium Bisulfite
Resolution 167-2023 – Approving contract w/Neo Solutions for Polymer Gravity Belt Thickener
Resolution 168-2023 – Approving contract w/Neo Solutions for Polymer Centrifuge
Resolution 169-2023 – Approving contract w/Neo Solutions for Polymer Secondary Clarification
Resolution 170-2023 – Approving contract w/Premier Magnesia for Magnesium Hydroxide

Yeas: Brown, Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto (7)

Nays: None (0)

REPORTS RECEIVED BY COUNCIL

The Fire Department Report for October, 2023 was received.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Brown, Chairperson of the Finance Committee had no report.

Mr. O'Connell, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee stated that Mr. John Kingsley, Director of Economic Development was present at the Committee meeting to discuss his department's budget for 2024.

Mrs. Sultana, Chairperson of the Planning & Code Committee had no report.

Dr. Ruggles, Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee advised Council that he has been appointed to the Sewer Authority for the State.

Mr. Edinger, Chairperson of the Public Works Committee spoke about the legislation that he would have later in the meeting and also congratulated Mrs. Rose and Mr. Pintabone on their election to Council.

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Mr. Melan, Chairperson of the Administration Committee had no report.

Mr. Scheer, City Solicitor had no report.

Mayor Panto thanked everyone for their concern after his fall at the Halloween Parade. He stated that he was checked out and everything is good. He thanked everyone for their concern.

Mayor Panto stated that Bacon Fest was a huge success.

Mayor Panto stated that roughly \$35,970 in parking fees were collected and will cover the overtime that was needed for the festival.

Mayor Panto invited everyone to the Bridge dedication on Thursday, November 9th starting at 4:30 with the lighting of the Bridge by Larry Holmes at 5:00. Mayor Panto spoke briefly on this topic.

Mayor Panto stated that when he presented his budget he also mentioned some topics that will be discussed about parking.

Mayor Panto stated that the “parking summit” will take place on Monday, November 13th at 1:30. Mayor Panto invited Councilmember O’Connell and Ruggles. Recommendations will then be made to the Business and Residential communities then recommendations will be made to Council.

Mr. Campos, City Administrator stated that police testing is wrapping up and there are 26 possible candidates for approximately 2 or 3 positions. Mr. Campos continued to speak on this matter.

Mr. Campos stated that he believes this is the most diverse group of candidates the City has had.

Mrs. Sultana asked if there were any woman on the list. Mr. Campos stated that there is a woman on the list, however, civil service rules state that more points are given to military applicants. Mr. Campos also spoke briefly on background checks.

Mr. Campos stated that the gateway sign which was paid for by the Choice Neighborhood Grant will be erected across Northampton Street at 6th Street.

Mr. Campos stated that the estimated number of attendees for Bacon Fest was approximately 82,000/83,000 over the entire festival. Mr. Campos spoke briefly on this matter.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Panto stated that the only correspondence that was received was the letter from Mr. Dan Cohen regarding the proposed ceasefire Resolution (copy attached hereto)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

The next item on the agenda was a Resolution approving the purchase of a new 2027 Pierce Enforcer Fire Pumper Truck at a cost of \$1,139,897.

The following Resolution was introduced by Dr. Ruggles

171-2023

The above Resolution was approved on motion of Dr. Ruggles seconded by Mr. O'Connell by the following vote:

However, before the vote was taken, Mayor Panto asked Mr. Campos if the City was purchasing any of the options because the Resolution does not include any options. Mr. Campos addressed Mayor Panto's question.

Mayor Panto stated that he remembers when the City could buy Pumper Trucks for \$350,000 – the most recent pumper truck which was purchased by Lafayette College was \$650,000 now they are up over one million dollars. He also advised Council that they will be committing future Mayor and Councilmembers to the amount of \$1,139,897.00 because it is a four (4) year delivery period.

Yeas: Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown (7)

Nays: None (0)

The next item on the agenda was a Resolution approving a proposal w/HDR Engineering Inc. to prepare the application for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for the Easton Iron and Metal property located at 1111-1113 Bushkill Drive at a cost of \$28,700.

The following Resolution was introduced by Mr. Edinger

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172-2023

The above Resolution was approved on motion of Mr. Edinger seconded by Mr. O'Connell by the following vote:

Yeas: Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger (7)

Nays: None (0)

The next item on the agenda was a Resolution approving an Agreement with Barry Isett & Associates to provide a topographical survey and design for the Nesquehoning Park Cemetery at a cost of \$20,900.

The following Resolution was introduced by Mr. Edinger

173-2023

The above Resolution was approved on motion of Mr. Edinger seconded by Mr. Brown by the following vote:

Before the vote was taken Mayor Panto that Mr. Brown is doing a great job on that committee. The committee found that one of the City's Pocket Parks actually had some African American adults and children's graves which were found. Barry Isett & Associates will come up with a design for the park to memorialize those buried there.

Yeas: O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger, Melan (7)

Nays: None (0)

The next item on the agenda was a Resolution approving an Agreement with Chester Valley Engineers for design of park improvements at Centennial Park at a cost of \$19,880.

The following Resolution was introduced by Mr. Edinger

174-2023

The above Resolution was approved on motion of Mr. Edinger seconded by Mr. O'Connell by the following vote:

Yeas: Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger, Melan, O'Connell (7)

Nays: None (0)

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The next item on the agenda was a Resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel & Palestine.

The Resolution was introduced by Mrs. Sultana, however, the Resolution died due to lack of a second.

PUBLIC COMMENT

On any matter

Mr. Art Ravitz, 144 Church Street asked about the Bridge lighting and Mayor Panto address Mr. Ravitz's question.

Ms. Gazel Jabir, 117 N. Ott Street, Allentown, Pa., again addressed Council stating that the anger does not come from the Resolution - she doesn't like what Mayor Panto is saying about the ceasefire Resolution bringing out divisiveness. She stated that she already met and will meet with two people who addressed Council earlier, one of which is a Jewish man and she doesn't appreciate him saying that this Resolution is bringing out divisiveness, if anything, she believes that tonight brings out the unity in us and the humanity in us. Mayor Panto stated that he never said that about anyone who is here at the meeting – it is outside the community.

Some discussion continued on this matter.

Mr. Regina Padilla, 1212 E. 3rd Street, Bethlehem, Pa. started out by saying that she is neither Palestinian nor Jewish. She stated to Mayor Panto that he said that students told a professor that they are afraid for their lives – don't you think that a ceasefire would calm their fears, help de-escalate the situation and make them feel safer. Also, she stated that Mayor Panto won't agree with the ceasefire unless the hostages are released – how can they be released unless there is a ceasefire?

There was a brief discussion on this matter.

Mrs. Sultana stated, for the record, that everyone needs to understand that this Resolution will come back at the next Council meeting. Mayor Panto stated, "not necessarily". The Chairman of Council, meaning Mayor Panto, has to approve the agenda. This Resolution did not even get a second so he is not sure why this would come back.

Mrs. Sultana then stated that everyone needs to understand the difference between the Resolution and the Legislation – it seems like everyone is confused. This Resolution will not change any law. She stated that this Resolution is primarily used to express Council's opinion or belief so saying that it is not in our jurisdiction is pointless. The Resolution is calling on Congresswoman Susan Wild and Senators Fetterman and Casey to call for a ceasefire. It is a local issue due to its

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immediate impact on local communities, and yes, there are people from Easton, including South Side. Local and Federal governments do work together. We reach out to Federal Government for grants and assistance to address other local issues. The conflict between Palestine and Israel directly affects the lives of citizens living in our City, therefore, calling for a ceasefire is crucial to protect the lives of many.

Mrs. Sultana stated that seventy (70) percent of the City's population is white – does that mean it is okay to ignore the thirty (30) percent of the people of color?

Mayor Panto then stated that Mrs. Sultana keeps putting wording in everyone's mouth.

Mayor Panto addressed Mrs. Sultana's statement – stating that he has never stopped anyone from outside the City from speaking. He continued by stating that we want people to come without civil discord. What he is looking for, from all the people that live in different communities, to ask their local government to pass a Resolution.

Mrs. Sultana stated that she lives in South Side Easton and her voice matters and calling for a ceasefire is calling for peace and the conflict is leading to a humanitarian crisis as civilians are suffering the most.

Mrs. Sultana continued to discuss this matter.

Ms. Raya Aydelaal asked Mayor Panto directly to call Susan Wild and ask for a ceasefire. Ms. Abdelall asked the Mayor if his opinion matters to Susan Wild Will you go to here and tell her that a ceasefire would be great. Mayor Panto stated that he would gladly tell her that and it would have as much of an impact as everyone in the audience.

Ms. Aydelaal then asked Mr. Brown if he would do the same. Mr. Brown stated that he would not call Congresswoman Wild and ask for a ceasefire.

Ms. Aydelaal then reminded everyone in the audience to remember that when Mr. Brown is up for election.

Mr. Brown stated that he appreciates the fact that she comes to the podium and speak publicly and Council has to sit and be quiet. He stated that he has just as much power as she does to call her office. If he called, he probably would not be able to speak to Congresswoman Wild personally. He also stated that there is not one Councilmember sitting up here this evening that does not have the heart for these innocent children but this has nothing to do with the business of Easton. This is a Federal level issue.

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November 8, 2023

Mr. Edinger stated that while Ms. Abdelall has a right to speak – he will not answer any of her questions and does not have the right to interrogate Council.

The conversation continued on this issue.

Ms. An-Nisa Muqtadir, 237 W. Wilkes Barre Street, Easton, Pa., stated that her father was born in 1939 and her mother was born in 1949. Her father went through the civil rights movement, stood up and was an advocate. Her father did not, by any means, support the settlers state of Israel. She continued to speak on this matter.

Ms. Muqtadir stated that when Council says they have sat silently and felt interrogated, Council has been more than out of order – they have been disrespectful to the people that have voted “you” into office.

Ms. Muqtadir also stated that they have seen Council smirking, looking away, on their cells phones and don’t think that they will forget that when the next election comes up. Also, when Mrs. Sultana brings this Resolution back, and she will, they will still be here. She stated the Public Safety was mentioned, and she told Council that her parents must go out very early because they fear for their safety.

Before Council questions her ally’s, they know their facts and she knows her facts, so Council should take the “smirks” off of their faces because guaranteed, the people will win. They will continue to fight and win. She stated that council is playing a game of words.

Ms. Muqtadir continued to speak on this matter.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m. on motion of Mr. Edinger and Mr. Brown by the following vote:

Yeas: O’Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger, Melan (7)

Nays: None (0)



Rita M. Messa
City Clerk



CITY OF EASTON

PENNSYLVANIA
City Clerk's Office

November 3, 2023

COUNCIL MEETING NOTICE

A meeting of City Council has been scheduled for Wednesday, November 8, 2023, beginning at 6:00 p.m. for the transaction of Regular Business.

The meeting will be held in Council Chambers located on the 3rd floor of City Hall, 123 S. 3rd Street, Easton, Pa.

All meetings of City Council are open to the Public and are accessible to persons with disabilities.

The City of Easton Council Meeting will also be live streamed starting at 6:00 p.m.

Live Stream video: <http://bit.ly/EastonLiveStream>

MASKS ARE OPTIONAL

Rita M. Messa
City Clerk

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA

Stated Session
Wednesday
November 8, 2023
6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. INVOCATION
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
4. ROLL CALL
5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
6. ACTION ON MINUTES – Approving minutes of October 25, 2023
7. PROMOTION FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT
 - Terrance Hand promoted to Captain
8. STATEMENT BY COUNCILMAN RUGGLES
9. PUBLIC COMMENT – Agenda Items Only
10. CONSENT AGENDA
 - (a) Bill No. 37 – Amending Section 475-15 of Chapter 475 – Sewers
 - (b) Resolution appointing Michael Brett as the City’s Fair Housing Officer
 - (c) Resolution approving contract w/Holland Co. for Sodium Bisulfite
 - (d) Resolution approving contract w/Neo Solutions for Polymer Gravity Belt Thickener
 - (e) Resolution approving contract w/Neo Solutions for Polymer Centrifuge
 - (f) Resolution approving contract w/Neo Solutions for Polymer Secondary Clarification
 - (g) Resolution approving contract w/Premier Magnesia for Magnesium Hydroxide
11. REPORTS RECEIVED BY COUNCIL
 - (a) Fire Department Report for October, 2023
12. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 - (a) Finance (Kenneth Brown)
 - (b) Economic Development (David O’Connell)
 - (c) Planning and Code (Taiba Sultana)
 - (d) Public Safety (Roger Ruggles)
 - (e) Public Works (James Edinger)

- (f) Administration (Peter Melan)
- (g) Report of City Solicitor (Attorney Joel Scheer)
- (h) Report of Mayor (Salvatore J. Panto Jr.)
- (i) Report of City Administrator (Luis Campos)

13. CORRESPONDENCE

14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

15. NEW BUSINESS

- (a) Resolution approving the purchase of a new 2027 Pierce Enforcer Fire Pumper Truck (\$1,139,897)
- (b) Resolution approving a Proposal w/HDR Engineering (\$28,700)
- (c) Resolution approving an Agreement w/Barry Isett & Associates (\$20,900)
- (d) Resolution approving an Agreement w/Chester Valley Engineers (\$19,880)
- (e) Resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel & Palestine

16. PUBLIC COMMENT – On Any Matter

17. ADJOURNMENT

Easton Fire Department

Easton, PA

This report was generated on 11/1/2023 7:47:03 AM



Count of Incidents by Incident Type for Incident Status for Date Range

Incident Status(s): All Incident Statuses | Sort By: IncidentType | Start Date: 10/01/2023 | End Date: 10/31/2023

INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS
100 - Fire, other	1
111 - Building fire	2
113 - Cooking fire, confined to container	3
118 - Trash or rubbish fire, contained	3
138 - Off-road vehicle or heavy equipment fire	1
142 - Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire	1
151 - Outside rubbish, trash or waste fire	1
300 - Rescue, EMS incident, other	2
311 - Medical assist, assist EMS crew	12
321 - EMS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury	14
322 - Motor vehicle accident with injuries	4
323 - Motor vehicle/pedestrian accident (MV Ped)	1
324 - Motor vehicle accident with no injuries.	10
353 - Removal of victim(s) from stalled elevator	3
412 - Gas leak (natural gas or LPG)	8
413 - Oil or other combustible liquid spill	1
424 - Carbon monoxide incident	4
440 - Electrical wiring/equipment problem, other	1
444 - Power line down	2
500 - Service Call, other	1
511 - Lock-out	1
531 - Smoke or odor removal	2
551 - Assist police or other governmental agency	2
561 - Unauthorized burning	1
600 - Good intent call, other	1
611 - Dispatched & cancelled en route	3
622 - No incident found on arrival at dispatch address	1
671 - HazMat release investigation w/no HazMat	1
700 - False alarm or false call, other	42
730 - System malfunction, other	7
733 - Smoke detector activation due to malfunction	2
735 - Alarm system sounded due to malfunction	2
743 - Smoke detector activation, no fire - unintentional	1
744 - Detector activation, no fire - unintentional	56
745 - Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional	2
Incidents Without Incident Type	20
Total Incidents	219

This report displays Incidents by Incident type for the selected Incident Status (es) and chosen date range. Nemsis 2 & 3 Incidents Included.



emergencyreporting.com

Doc Id: 1673

Page # 1 of 1

Roger Ruggles' response: City Council meeting 11-8-23

I would like to thank Council for giving me the time and opportunity to respond to what I feel was an attack on me by Ms. Sultana at the previous council meeting. After I tried to explain that there are multiple armed conflicts going on in the world today (according to the Council on Foreign Relations there are currently 26 active armed conflicts in the world) I stated I do not have the time to research every one as they change on a daily basis, she responded that if I did not have the time then maybe I should not be an elected official. I heard Ms. Sultana accuse me of not knowing about worldly events and based on that accusation not a good fit for City Council.

This comment felt like an attack on me. Normally it is not in my nature to advertise what I do because I don't want to stand in the spotlight or try to get headlines like some people, I do what I do to help people. But because of this attack on my character, I feel it necessary to describe my experiences.

I have served people here in our community, in our country and in the world. Here in Easton, I have coached youth sports, I have worked with Habitat for Humanity in building houses, I have spent nights in the roving homeless shelters and more recently spent nights with homeless families and I have supported nonprofits. On City Council I chair the Public Safety committee and meet monthly with both the police and fire chiefs. I attend the meetings of the pension board and have lead an effort to engage senior citizens in our recreational activities. I have hosted several community breakfasts and a summit for nonprofits, I wrote a white paper that resulted in the city obtaining a \$350,000 grant for a LIDAR system that will make our community safer. I have worked to make our community safer and tried to bring our community closer together.

In my spare time I not only do work in the city but also do work nationally and internationally. On a national scale I have worked in clean-up activities in Harlem in New York, and I have travelled multiple times to the Gulf Coast to do hurricane relief work following hurricane Katrina.

Internationally I have traveled to Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, following their earthquake that killed over 100,000 people. While there I built an ozone water treatment facility to supply clean drinking water to an impoverished community of Port au Prince and worked in a medical clinic. I have traveled to Honduras, the second poorest country in the western hemisphere, where I worked in a remote medical clinic, at schools, and at a hospital. I have walked through and worked in the slums of Cape Town, South Africa and was a part of a National Science Foundation panel that developed a research agenda to address the issues facing the people in Sub-Saharan Africa. I have conducted research in the wetlands in and around Lake Victoria that was intended to improve water quality in the lake which is the water supply for the 3.8 million residents of Kampala, Uganda. I spent an entire academic year in Uganda teaching college students, equipping them to address the many problems in their country.

I have outlined briefly how I have spent my time both on City Council and my free time. I feel that as a council member I have served and will continue to serve the people of the City of Easton by working to provide a safe community and striving to bring people together.

I resent Ms. Sultana's accusation that I am unaware of worldly events. I have stood shoulder to shoulder and worked side by side with some of the poorest people on this planet to supply clean drinking water, shelter, medical facilities, improve sanitary conditions, and provide some hope for their future.

I have raked up crack vials in a park in Harlem and helped to rebuild a community on the Gulf coast that looked like a war zone after Katrina.

Here in Easton, I have worked with youth, the homeless, supported nonprofit agencies and have worked diligently on City Council.

I feel that Ms. Sultana's attack on me was irresponsible along with other irresponsible statements that she made at our last City Council meeting. Your irresponsible statements are hurtful and result in throwing fuel on the fire of hate in our community. How dare you question my time.

I want to thank City Council again for allowing me this time to respond.

I have supplied a copy of my comments to the Clerk to be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Daniel E. Cohen
Philip M. Hof
Christopher M. Reid
Isaac A. Hof
J. Randall Keiser, Jr.
Norman Seidel, *Founder 1912-2014*

Trustee of the Daniel Seidel Trust
Trustee of the Philip M. Hof Trust
Attorneys at Law



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November 7, 2023

Salvatore J. Panto, Jr., Mayor
Ken Brown, Council Member
James Edinger, Council Member
Peter Melan, Council Member
David O'Connell, Council Member
Dr. Roger Ruggles, Council Member
Taiba Sultana, Council Member

Easton City Council
123 S Third Street
Easton City Hall
Easton, PA 18042

Lady and Gentlemen:


I feel compelled to address the Resolution proposed by Ms. Sultana:

1) A cease fire was in effect on October 6, 2023, and was not simply ignored but was totally rejected by Hamas in what is only the latest of a number of ceasefires over the years that Hamas ignored because of their charter to destroy Israel and kill Jews.

2) There can be no end to the current violence unless and until the hostages are returned and Hamas destroyed. As Americans, we would never allow such a force to exist on our territory, and neither should Israel. There is zero evidence that Hamas has ever valued peace or human life. To the contrary, they have committed the most horrific violence over the years, and particularly on October 7th. Any group that can sanction and in deed condone the horrors that Hamas visited on Jews in Israel cannot be considered someone who would honor any cease fire. While the frustration of the Palestinian people is understandable, much of that frustration should be directed to Hamas, which has imposed a virtual reign of terror on its own constituents who, while somewhat powerless to push back against Hamas, nevertheless have condoned its actions and indeed celebrated the horrors that were inflicted by Hamas on Israelis.

Finally, I don't believe that City Council has any place entertaining foreign policy matters of this nature. This is not City business.

Respectfully,



Daniel E. Cohen

DEC:ssd

cc: Jeri Zimmerman
Aaron Gorodzinsky
Joel Scheer, Esquire