BOROUGH OF WEST HAZLETON
100 SOUTH FOURTH STREET
WEST HAZLETON, PENNSYLVANIA 18202

(570) 455-7851
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MINUTES
Council Meeting
April 14th, 2026

1. **Call to Order by President Henry Kreisl**

2. **Roll call of Council Members**

   Chura: Present, **Vercusky:** Present, **Sharkey:** Present, **Duffy:** Present, **Dutz:** Present, **Kreisl:** Present, **Verrastro:** Present.

3. **Motion to accept Meeting Minutes from Public Council meeting held on 3/12/2026:**

   Motion to approve: Verrastro
   Second: Dutz

   Vote
   Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro:** Yes, **Duffy**: Yes.
   Motion Passed Unanimously.

4. **Committee Reports**
   a. **Police:** Submitted by Sgt. Buglio, read by Chair Verrastro.
   b. **Fire:** Submitted by Chief Cressman, read by Chair Vercusky.
   c. **Code and Zoning:** Submitted by CEO Luis Alberto, read by Chair Chura.
   d. **Streets:** Submitted by Foreman Fogarty, read by Chair Duffy.
   e. **Finance**: Submitted by Borough Manager Schweitzer, read by Chair Dutz.
   f. **Buildings & Grounds**: Submitted by Chair Sharkey, read by Chair Sharkey

   Motion to accept committee reports: Chura
   Second: Dutz
   Vote
   Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Sharkey: Yes**, **Duffy**: Yes **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro:** Yes
   Motion Passed Unanimously.

5. **Public Participation:** CP Kreisl: This is the part of the meeting where we open it up to Public Participation. This is your opportunity to address Council and/or the Mayor. Does anybody have anything that they would like to put in front of Council?

Bruce Miller, Hazleton: I am here because I have been advised that West Hazleton has entered into an agreement with ICE, or is contemplating it. Unless you are living under rock, everybody here has to know that if West Hazleton is contemplating an agreement with ICE, its going to be incredibly controversial. Nevertheless, what I've been told, is that the Borough did enter an agreement, with no opportunity for the residents, particularly the 73% Hispanic population to be heard, and express their concerns about such an association. Again, I've been told there is no extended discussion by Council as to whether or not this was a good idea, but only a straw vote. As you all should know, ICE has a reputation for and a history of, violating proper law enforcement procedures. Authorities on police across the country have held that ICE is violating the law. Either because they are insufficiently trained or they are told by their superiors that they don't have to follow the law. If West Hazleton Police cooperate with ICE, the community is in jeopardy of legal consequences. Includint the possibility of personal liability for the Mayor, Chief, members of Council, and the individual officers. Police today have a very difficult and stressful job. In fact, they're watched and filmed to ensure they follow proper procedure. Now, it appears without proper consultation and discussion with the community, they're facing being placed in jeopardy, facing criminal liability. Make no mistake, under this agreement your police officers can be assigned to units, teams, or task forces, to participate in ICE raids. Make warrantless arrests. Maintain custody of immigrants, all at the Borough's expense. If things go wrong, and an officer is arrested or named as a defendant in litigation, there is no guarantee that the Department of Justice will agree to representation. There is no provision in this agreement for indemnification, or any liability upon the Borough or its officers. You're on your own. This explains what officers will be called upon to do, and the Borough's and officer's liability. You know, there is a human element, an ethical and moral question to the Borough's entering into an agreement with organization described a stormtroopers, who are operating in violation of our Constitution and the principles of Democracy.
CP Kreisl: We are at the end of our 3-minute limit, but I'm going to let you finish your thought. Please, continue.
BM: Thank you. Over 70% of those kidnapped and detained by ICE thugs with their names and faces covered, and in full combat gear, which immigrants are quickly whisked out of the country with no due process, over 70% of those people have no criminal records. They are mostly people who have been in this country for years, working hard. Raising families and paying taxes, and contributing to their community. Unlike many of our citizens, who are not hard working, not paying taxes, not contributing to the community, and in many cases a drain on the community. There are those who say, "legal is legal". If you're legal, you have nothing to worry about. This is just too simplistic. Many of these immigrants are good people, who have come here at great danger, and expense, to escape kidnapping, death, threats, poverty, gangs, to make a better life for their families and children. We should be welcoming these hard working, law abiding, tax paying immigrants. Consider for a moment, families, fearful of leaving their homes. Going to the market, going to Church, school, going to community events. Going to work. Imagine always being afraid, that you are suddenly going to be preyed upon. Surrounded by masked thugs. Forcibly being taken into custody, and being whisked out of this country with no due process. Do you all really, really want to be a part of that? Knowing that you may have contributed to tearing families apart…I certainly hope not. I suggest that each of you read that agreement very carefully, see what you're getting yourself and the community into, and conclude that this is not what the good people of West Hazleton want. Terminate this agreement before its too late. Thank you for extending me the time.

Mrs. Childs, 32-34 W. Broad Street: I'm also here regarding your agreement with ICE, and I want to reference the Standard Speaker, on March 21 of 2026. Mr. Kreisl, I report you to say that Council

discussed the 287g program with the Public Safety Director, and took a straw poll in favor of joining, but expect a formal vote in the Council meeting in April. So, this is the April meeting for West Hazleton, and I don't see this in the agenda.
CP Kreisl: It was not put on the agenda because we have not decided completely yet.
MC: This is the first time I've seen you, and I don't want to be disrespectful to you, but everyone knows that unless ICE is lying, that you signed it on March 19th. You are on the ICE website, with Hazleton that you are working with ICE. How did this happen? Why does ICE have you in the paper that you have signed it?
CP Kreisl: As far as I'm aware, this Council has not signed any agreement.
MC: We want to ask you, we know we have a situation here like in Hazleton, if you decide to sign with ICE, as the gentlemen told you we have 72.2% people that are Hispanic. I know people who are darker than me who were stopped by Police.
CP Kreisl: West Hazleton Police?
MC: No, not in West Hazleton, in Hazleton. I wanted to give you the example. Someone was stopped and told they ran a stop sign when they didn't. The point is, we are afraid. We ask you to think about how that is going to affect our community. We have a lot of people here who are legal and working hard, and we don't want them to be profiled all the time, because of our skin, or because we are not Anglo. I hope, please, that what you say in front of us is true, and you consider it.
CP Kreisl: The Public Safety Director is off until the end of the week, but I will have a discussion with him about it. I will ask him. If I could please reinforce, the way it was talked about to us, was that by us signing an agreement to cooperate and be in an agreement with ICE, that we would receive funding towards a vehicle, officers would get proper training, and we would be reimbursed $7,500.00 per officer for the training. It would be a way for our officers to be properly trained in the dos and don'ts. In my quote to the Standard Speaker, I don't know if they used it or not, that our intent was not to stop and check, random pullovers or anything like that. Its only so the officers don't have to involve higher agencies, that they have the proper training, be trusted to do it in West Hazleton, and be able to enforce the law when it needs to be enforced. As I look around the table here, everyone of us is the grandchildren of immigrants.
MC: Yes, but a lot of people forgot this.
CM Sharkey: Don't get me wrong, the money is great but we aren't doing this for the money. I don't think anyone here is in favor of random stops just because of the color of your skin. This is something we're going to look at.
MC: This must be so hard for you, you are public people and we vote for you. So, we understand & want you to understand that we don't want to be defending people that are the problem. Thank you so much for your time.
Council: Thank you. **CP Kreisl**: Anyone else?

Robert Childs, 32-34 W. Broad Street: I'm not as eloquent as my wife, but I'll try to make myself heard. The are several aspects of this that concern me a great deal. First, the people in Hazleton are playing this down as the are going to be the buffer between ICE and the civilians. Let me read from a list of what ICE expects. The authority to interrogate an alien or suspected alien, the authority to arrest without a warrant, an alien in the United States, if the officer has reason to believe the alien is a resident of the United States in violation of the law. The power to execute and serve warrants of arrest, for immigration violations, the authority to take and maintain custody of aliens arrested by ICE, on behalf of ICE. The power and authority to take and maintain custody of aliens arrested pursuant to the immigration laws, and transport said aliens to ICE approved detention facilities. Now, again, I think you all can understand that this leads to targeting or profiling, whichever you want to call it. People with brown skin are at risk, you and I don't have brown skin, and are not at risk. In terms of local things that have happened recently, a West Hazleton individual traveling in Schuylkill County was stopped because of a minor traffic problem. Appeared In Court, the Judge said this is minor, she paid whatever was involved. The Schuylkill County District Attorney said "Oh No, you're going to ICE!". She's now in Texas. This woman is married to an American citizen, has 5 children, 2 are twins, one with diabetes, and

she's now in Texas in Jail. That doesn't make any sense because again, this was a local person. Who has a good track record. She works and pays her bills, and all of a sudden, she's in Texas. That just grinds me. The other thing that I saw very recently was 4 people arrested in Mahanoy City by local police, not by ICE were turned over to ICE. My understanding is that ICE can't contribute to what your local police do, in the sense that, they can't stop you for driving too fast, give you a parking ticket. They can't do anything of that nature. But they are always there saying "By the way," the first thing you look at is their registration. That to me is wrong. I agree with Attorney Miller. That's not the way we Hazeltonians, West Hazeltonians, Americans are. I have nothing further to say but I hope you consider very seriously the implications of what you are doing. Its not as simple as Hazleton tried to make it out to be. Its very complicated.
CP Kreisl: I very much appreciate your thoughts, thank you. Anyone else?

Ms. Rodriguez, Property Owner: Hello, and even though I am not a West Hazleton resident, I own properties here. To make it short because they already expressed their concerns about the 287g Agreement, I just wanted to bring something up, a story. When everything started happening with ICE, my son, he's ten, my daughter is 13. She has darker skin because she looks more like my husband. My son came home from school and said "Mom, are they going to deport her? I said, what are you talking about? He said yeah, because she doesn't look White, she looks Hispanic. Do you know how sad that is? That a child has to come home & tell you this because this is what he is hearing from other kids in school. That his sister might get deported. As you all said, as the grandchildren of immigrants, no one is legal on this stolen land. We're all immigrants. This town was built by the hand of immigrants, for a better future for their family, just like we did. So, I know you say that you haven't signed anything, but it does appear on the ICE website that West Hazleton has entered into an agreement.
CP Kreisl: As I said, I will bring that up with the Public Safety Director.
MR: Its right there… So, be the bigger person. Be the better town. The town that I decided to open my business, even though I am a Hazleton resident for 22 years. I did it here because you guys made it so easy for me. All the permits and everything that was required. I did my due diligence and you guys supported me 100%. I will be grateful for that, always. So, be the bigger person. Make an example, and don't sign that agreement because it is going to devastate the community. It already is, a lot of people are afraid, even to go to church because they think they might be stopped and something may happen because of everything that is happening in our country. So, I would encourage you to look it up really good, and that money is not worth it. The community of 73% Latinos living in this town is more worth it than taking that money now. It is going to run out, very easily. We're hard-working people, we work in warehouses and have small businesses because we believe in this town. We chose this town to be our home for our people. Thank you.
Council: Thank you.
CP Kreisl: The only other thing that I'd like to add to all that again, our intention is not to inflict fear, we don't want anything like what has gone on in the rest of the Country to happen in West Hazleton. I can't speak for Jeff Cusat, but I would imagine that is his intention as well. To be able to have it in house. That our community should take care of our community. It may not be the right time, but we're going to be having our Memorial Day Parade. I thought I saw Fermin Diaz-Fermin? He has worked with us in the past. If we could get more of the community form the school to come and participate in our parade, our functions with the police and fire departments. All of those things go a long way to integrate our community together, so that everyone feels comfortable around one another. It has been a rocky road the last ten years, I see it, I understand it, and as you said we're all the grandchildren of immigrants. I see a lop of families, I see the work that HIP does in Hazleton, I support them. We hear you, an appreciate you all coming out to speak with us because we all feel the same way. I know everyone at this table feels the exact same way. We are not going to have our police stop people for no reason. We are only looking to work in a manner that will take care of the bad elements, and the good elements deserve what every one of us deserves. Doctor?

RC: The only thing here is, ICE has its own list. They come into a place like Cargill or one of the other plants, and they say we want you, you, & you. They have records that say you aren't in this country legally. That is what concerns me is the profiling we're talking about, and that's dangerous. The other thing was the Hazleton Area School District is looking to perhaps purchase a large building here in West Hazleton. It can be fixed up faster than they can build a new school behind the high school. This would accommodate about 500 students from all over the district. They'll ask me to vote to purchase that building, and I'll vote no if it looks like they are going to be profiling parents who are coming to pick up their children. That can't happen. What bothers me is targeting people who are hardworking, tax paying, citizens who have been around a long time. They're our neighbors. All of a sudden, the first question is, "Are you legal?" That's the wrong question to ask as the first question.
CP Kreisl: Our intent, our administration and our policing is not looking for that. We are the lowest tier when it comes to community service. I had a guy come to me and say 'You're a politician!" I had to sit back and absorb that. I'm just a guy that wants to make sure the trash gets picked up, the fire trucks run, & we have police protection. That's the reason everybody is here.

6. **Discussion of Work Session Actions:**

   a. **Old Business**

      i. **Delinquent Garbage Report for March 2026:** Read by Council President Kreisl.

   b. **New Business**

i. Motion to approve handicap parking space for **Ernesto Varona, 42 North Warren Street.**
Motion to approve: Chura
Second: Sharkey

Vote
Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro:** Yes, **Duffy**: Yes.
Motion Passed Unanimously.

ii. Motion to accept bid from **Kress Auto Wreckers** for **16 abandoned Impound Lot** vehicles in the amount of **$10,000.00.**
Motion to Approve: Verrastro
Second: Dutz
Vote
Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Duffy:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro: Yes**.
Motion Passed Unanimously.

iii. Motion to adopt **Ordinance #1 of 2026 – An Ordinance of the Borough of West Hazleton, Luzerne County, to Amend the Borough of West Hazleton Police Pension Plan to Provide Credit for Prior Police Service Under ACT 49 of 2024**.

Motion to Approve: Sharkey
Second: Verrastro
Vote
Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Duffy:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro:** Yes.
Motion Passed Unanimously.

ii. Comments by Council and Mayor:

Announcements, Misc:

Announce Next Meeting:

1. **Council President Kreisl-**
   The next Work Session Meeting will be Tuesday, May 5th, and the next Public Council Meeting will be Tuesday, May 12th. **CP Kreisl: I'm looking for a motion to continue this regular meeting to Thursday, April 16th at 6 pm, at which Council will consider whether to approve the Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to Allow Data Centers. The continued Regular Meeting is open to the public.**
   Motion: Chura

Second: Dutz
Vote
Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Duffy:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro:** Yes.
Motion Passed Unanimously.

Meeting to be continued on Thursday, April 16th at 6 pm.

Attested:

James Schweitzer
Borough Manager

BOROUGH OF WEST HAZLETON
100 SOUTH FOURTH STREET
WEST HAZLETON, PENNSYLVANIA 18202

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MINUTES
Council Meeting
April 16th, 2026-Continued from April, 14th 2026

1. **Call to Order by President Henry Kreisl**

2. **Roll call of Council Members**

   Chura: Present, **Vercusky:** Present, **Sharkey:** Present, **Duffy:** Present, **Dutz:** Present, **Kreisl:** Present, **Verrastro:** Present.

3. **Public Participation: CP Kreisl**: Now I open up the floor to Public Participation. Does anyone have anything to present to Council?

   Rick Budgeon, 8 Fawn Drive: The company I work for is currently building an 26,000 square foot center. My concerns are, the noise generation that's going to come from this facility. What's the square footage of this building?
   CP Kreisl: I don't have any specifics on that.
   RB: So you don't know the size of the cooling units? What size are the generators?
   CP Kreisl: We are only looking to do an ordinance that would give us a portion of the Borough that they could be put in with the setbacks and the limitations. We don't have anything that is solid.
   RB: Does anybody on this board understand the amount of noise that a generator is going to cause? Do you know what the levels are?
   CP Kreisl: I do not have any.
   Solicitor Rockman: There are restrictions in the proposed amendment for sound.
   RB: There are restrictions, but the fact of the fact is, a generator, again it depends on the size of the facility and how many generators you need. I don't want to hear that the generator is only going to run when there's no power. That's outright a lie. All generators have to be turned on and run to keep them operational. A generator for a data center like this is going to put out anywhere from 96 to 110 decibels of noise. That's high. That's just the generators. Now again, depending on the size of your facility, and what type of equipment is going inside it, now you're going to generate 24/7 drone noise, anywhere from 80 to 96 decibels. 24/7. They're not going to go down. If those heat exchangers go down, guess what happens to the equipment inside the facility? It burns up, & now the facility itself inside. It sounds like you have no information on the facility size, no information of what is going in it, no cooling, & no generators. Depending on the number of servers that have to go inside of this facility, again, noise.

SR: That would all be part of the application for special exceptions.
RB: Right, but do you understand how far that noise will travel?
SR: Yes, and there are proposed noise restrictions.
RB: How far from Fawn Drive in feet, is the proposed area for the facility?
SR: It's on the map, that attached to the proposed amendment. I can't give an answer to you but the proposed amendment is available.
CP Kreisl: As of right now, the proposed ordinance limits them to the M-2. The M-2 would be defined as the industrial park. Then it would have required acres, setbacks.
RB: We all know where Fawn Drive is? Bent Pine?
CP Kreisl: We do.
RB: You do realize that we still get a lot of noise out of Valmont, right? This thing is going to be a lot closer than any plant in Valmont. So now your kind of squeezing our community between two industrial areas.
CP Kreisl: Right now, it's an M-2, which is just the park.
RB: Right. I'm just trying to make everyone aware here because I'm actually shocked that you don't know. Did anyone even try to look up any of this?
CP Kreisl: I've seen all the information that was provided to me regarding the noise levels and cooling.
RB: You should all take time to learn and get facts to educate yourselves on this before you make any kind of decisions. Thank you.
CP Kreisl: Thank you, anyone else?
Mike Benyo, 12 Fawn Drive: I'm Mike Benyo, my wife & I have lived on Fawn Drive for years. Aside from the things Rick just talked about, my concern is also for the site work at that location. What if there were to be any blasting? There's a lot of rock back in that area. There could be impacts from that, thank you.
CP Kreisl: Its one of the many reasons that we're taking a closer look at all of this, so we have as much information as possible. Thank you. Anyone else?

Todd Eachus, Partner Pure Green BioAg: Good evening, everyone. I know Councilman Sharkey needs no introduction. My name is Todd Eachus, formerly representing the 116 District. I'm currently a partner in Pure Green BioAg, & we're located in the CANBE Innovation Center located in Valmont.Industrial Park. Besides the many things that were already mentioned, I would ask you all to address other considerations. What are the water and electrical requirements of such a facility? Has anyone considered the impact of generators and air pollution? For the benefit of the community, I would ask you to please, take your time with this. Don't make a quick decision that could adversely affect not just the community, but have negative environmental impacts as well. Thank you for your time.
CP Kreisl: Thank you for that. Were there any other comments? Ok, on to new business.

4. **Discussion of Work Session Actions:**

   a. **New Business**

      i. Motion to adopt **Ordinance #2 of 2026 – An Ordinance of the Borough Amending West Hazleton Zoning Ordinance #11 of 2018 to Allow Data Centers.**
      Motion to approve: Verrastro
      Second: Chura

      Vote
      Chura: No, **Vercusky:** No, **Sharkey:** No, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** No, **Verrastro:** No, **Duffy**: No.

Motion Fails, 6-1.

ii. CP Kreisl: I'd like to make a motion to add an item to the agenda. A motion to add draft of a **Municipal Curative Amendment Review**.

Motion to Approve: Verrastro
Second: Duffy
Vote
Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Duffy:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro: Yes**.
Motion Passed Unanimously, 7-0.

Iii Motion to adopt **Resolution #3 of 2026 – A Resolution Initiating Municipal Curative Amendment Review, West Hazleton Borough, Luzerne County Pennsylvania.**

Motion to approve: Kreisl
Second: Chura

Vote
Chura: Yes, **Vercusky:** Yes, **Sharkey:** Yes, **Dutz:** Yes, **Kreisl:** Yes, **Verrastro:** Yes, **Duffy**: Yes.
Motion Passes Unanimously, 7-0.

ii. Comments by Council and Mayor:

CP Kreisl: I want to thank everyone for their input and concerns. Part of the reason we are doing this is to ensure everything is done correctly and not rushed. These data centers are popping up everywhere, and it's a new concept for all of us. I've had several people reach out to me with useful information, so we can properly educate ourselves and create a proper amendment for the Borough's Zoning Ordinance.
TE: Well done. I applaud all of you! This is the right thing to do. As I said, please, for the benefit of your residents, businesses, and the environment. Take your time and learn as much as you can so it is done right.
Council: Thank you.
CP Kreisl: Any other comments from Council? Ok.

Announcements, Misc:

Announce Next Meeting:

1. **Council President Kreisl-**
   The next Work Session Meeting will be Tuesday, May 5th, and the next Public Council Meeting will be Tuesday May 12th. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

iii. Motion to Adjourn

a. **Motion to adjourn:** Sharkey
Second: Dutz

Meeting Adjourned

Attested:

James Schweitzer
Borough Manager