

## LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF HAZLETON

I would like to give the citizens of Hazleton a quick summary of the fiscally responsible but, tough decisions that were made in the past few years. Unfortunately, in January of 2018, for the first time in four years the Hazleton City Council was forced to raise property taxes to cover the rising personnel expenses that originated from the union contracts which included raises, health care benefits, and pensions. Council was also forced to agree to increase the Earned Income Tax (EIT) to cover the Minimum Mandatory Obligations (MMO) for the pensions agreed upon prior to my term in office. The City had also decided to borrow money to cover the running deficit that has been carried for many years. The good news is, because of these decisions, financial strains were identified and addressed so the city could move forward and continue to progress.

To help offset all those responsible decisions that appear to be negative, the administration has worked extremely hard to find ways to save money. The City of Hazleton has received over \$10 million in various grants that were utilized for a large variety of improvements, equipment, and training. My administration has acquired a total of 19 emergency response vehicles, 6 Compressed Natural Gas buses, 1 Fire Engine, and 8 pieces of road equipment valued at nearly \$5 million without using property tax money.

By receiving the SAFER ("Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Responders") and the COPS ("Community Oriented Policing Services") grants, the City of Hazleton, with 42 Police Officers and 23 Firefighters, is at the highest public safety staffing levels in many years.

I was able to secure yearly savings by meeting with, interviewing, and negotiating with multiple healthcare and insurance companies. The City will see a savings of over \$300,000 annually on retired healthcare, \$48,000 on Vision and Dental insurance, and a savings of over \$80,000 by working with a new Workers Comp Insurance Company.

The City and I were successfully awarded an arbitration decision on pension overtime; this award will save the city over \$400,000 annually in Earned Income Tax.

So many positive things are happening in the City of Hazleton, economic growth is on the rise with businesses moving in, blighted properties are being repurposed, property values are soaring as available residential properties disappear, and people are feeling safer as crime rates continue to decrease.

With the tough decisions that have been made, the contract negotiations finalized, the economic projects that are started, and the grants and equipment we have received, please allow me to continue and complete the financially responsible plan I started by reelecting me to another term as your Mayor.

Sincerely,  
Mayor Jeffrey L. Cusat

Go to [MayorCusat.com](http://MayorCusat.com) to see additional information on the progress of Hazleton.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT AT SAFEST LEVELS SINCE 1988



With the aid of the \$360,612.00 SAFER Grant, "Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Responders," the City of Hazleton has recently hired five (5) firefighters which is the largest class in recent history. The City will now see staffing levels that have not been seen since 1988. We will have up to five (5) pieces of equipment in operation, at no additional cost, thanks to the grant that the City has received. The other benefit that taxpayers will recognize is non-emergency overtime will cease to exist.

## Mayor Negotiates Healthcare Saves City \$425,000.00 annually

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## Property Values are on the Rise!!

With so many positive things happening in the City of Hazleton, we are seeing economic growth on the rise allowing businesses moving in and make and investment. Businesses are being retained and blighted properties are being repurposed which has property values soaring. As crime rates continue to decrease, People are feeling safer and are moving into the city causing available residential properties to disappear off the market.

## Pin Point Accuracy

The City has purchased a G.I.S. system to log and inventory everything in the city from City owned assets, lights, and signs, to businesses, rental properties, and vacant properties, to complaints and incidents that happen throughout the City.

## Training Allows Mayor to Go Above and Beyond the Call of Duty



Seen here in the Standard Speaker fighting the fire on Carleton Avenue on July 4th, 2018.



Mayor Cusat who joined and trained with the Diamond Volunteer Fire Company in 2016 has completed hundreds of hours of training and earned 13 certificates for fire training and safety as well as additional in Emergency Management, Code Enforcement, Zoning, and Health.

## Towing Release Policy brings in Thousands of Dollars plus Additional Fines & Warrants

Mayor Cusat increased the parking enforcement staff from 2 full-time employees to 3 full-time office staff and 4 part-time enforcement officers, constructed a dedicated ticket processing office and created a Tow Release Policy. This new policy has been successful in requiring vehicles that are towed for unlawful reason to be held until the owner can be checked for outstanding parking tickets.

An additional feature of this policy includes a search for outstanding warrants to aid in the reduction of criminals on the streets of Hazleton.

"This policy is a key part of our continuing effort to focus on improving the quality of life in Hazleton. My administration will continue to aggressively enforce outstanding warrants and collect any unpaid violations" said Mayor Jeff Cusat.

Hundreds of outstanding parking tickets have been paid under this new policy generating thousands of dollars in fines in addition to multiple warrants being served.

"Our officers continue to work diligently to protect the citizens of Hazleton and the Tow Release Policy is a new tool that allows for a more efficient delivery and collection of fines and to serve process" concluded Police Chief Jerry Speziale.

## Audits of Rental Properties forces out-of-state landlords to pay their fare share

With a major concern of out-of-state landlords and renters not paying their fair share, there was a public outcry for an unlawful renter's tax. Mayor Cusat authorized an audit of all properties located in the City of Hazleton. This audit may have drawn some criticism as it flagged any property owner with multiple properties deeded to the same name. This minor inconvenience to some owners has proved to be very valuable to the City's Code Enforcement and Licensing office. This audit uncovered hundreds of undocumented rental units and multiple improperly zoned non-owner occupied residential properties. These properties are now listed on the rental registration list for licensing and inspections which forces the owners to pay for the services that are provided by the City.

## Updates in Licensing process creates Uniformity

Being a small family business owner himself, Mayor Cusat recognizes the frustration of those unlicensed businesses that are not paying the same costs as those operating lawfully.

A more extensive business license questionnaire was distributed asking for verification of account numbers and required professional services. This process has uncovered several undocumented places where business was being conducted.

Another neglected ordinance is the very unpopular merchantile tax placed on retail, service, and rental businesses. The city has recently prepared for an audit of all business that was conducted within the city limits in accordance to the ordinance. There is a large amount of business conducted in Hazleton by businesses without a City license that has gone unreported. Mayor Cusat expects this to generate a large amount of unreported and unpaid taxes.

## Delinquent Taxes Mayor Saves \$50,000 Annually

Mayor Cusat has taken a stand and put an end to Hazleton squandering income by halting the yearly decision to sell out the outstanding collectable delinquent taxes, which puts an end to high closing costs and fees.

# WHO IS JEFF CUSAT?

Mayor Jeff Cusat is the son of Rocco and Mary Ann (Solarek) Cusat, born on December 5, 1975, he is brother to Rocco Cusat and Kristin Hart, grandchild of Rocco and Lucy (Fierro) Cusat and William and Helen (Hudock) Solarek.

Jeff's roots originate from the Cusat family, originally from Milnesville, settled on the corner of 12th and Alter Streets in 1917 where they lived and opened a family operated general store. The Fierro family from Lattimer, The Solarek family from Freeland, and the Hudock family from Hazle Brook.

Jeff attended Monsignor Molino Elementary School from kindergarten through 8th grade, H. F. Grebey for 9th, the Hazleton High School for 10th, and graduated from Hazleton Area High School in 1994 before attending Penn State University to study accounting and HRIM (Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Management).

As a child Cusat played minor league baseball with Hoppy's Coal, Hazleton Little League with the Lions, PAL with 14th Ward, basketball at Monsignor Molino, football and track and field from 9th through 12th grades as a Mountaineer and a Cougar.

Jeff, no stranger to the business world, started his own business in 1983 at the age of 8. He and his brother would walk to the shopping center, buy baseball cards, combine them into complete sets, and then walk around selling them. This continued through high school and into college with the selling of sports collectibles and TY beanie babies at the card shop "Cusat's Cards and Collectibles" on Alter Street and sports memorabilia collecting shows throughout the tri-state region.

Jeff began cooking at the family restaurant, Cusat's Café, which opened in 1936, at the age of 12 with his grandfather Rocky and Uncle Bellhop. Jeff continued to work and learn from his father through high school and college. With the passing of his uncle and grandfather in the early 2000's, Jeff expanded Cusat's Cafe to what you see now.

When elected to Hazleton City Council, Jeff willingly turned over his ownership of the business and liquor license, as required by Pennsylvania State law. To continue his love of the family business,

Jeff opened Cusat's Grill inside the Mohegan Sun off-track wagering facility in East Stroudsburg in early 2013; it continues to operate today.

In early 2018, recognizing there was a need for a small scale (up to 100) catering hall and casual dining restaurant in the area, Jeff helped establish Rocco's on Muir Avenue in the Hazleton Heights.

Cusat also operated a bus trip and travel company, is a partner in a local telemarketing booking company, and owns rental properties throughout the area.

Jeff's love of children and his community can also be recognized as a coach, referee, and sponsor of children's sports teams in Hazleton and other communities. Dating back to the 1990's Cusat organized golf tournaments and other events to help a variety of local charities.

He became heavily involved with these local charities, especially Catholic Social Services Foster Care and Helping Hands, throughout the 2000's and continuing. It was during one of these events where he felt the need to get involved with restoring the image that most people remember.

Cusat decided to run for mayor in 2011 after then Mayor Barletta took his seat in Congress. Cusat stayed involved by attending meetings and became a City Councilman in 2014 before becoming the 28th Mayor of Hazleton in January 2016.

During his time in office the Mayor Cusat Hazleton Revitalization Fund was created. This organization helps fund pet projects such as the playground picnic table project, make improvements to city hall, donations, the playgrounds, grant applications, sponsorships of city events, holiday decorations, and local causes and needs. Proceeds are raised through the annual Mayor's Cup Golf Tournament, sales of collectible challenge coins, T-shirts, model cars, and private donations.

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## Mayor Calls for Safer Traffic in School Zones

The City of Hazleton has recently purchased an ENRAD (Electronic Non Radar Device) system to monitor speed in school zones and in other areas. This system can be set up and moved to areas with concern for pedestrian safety.

## AVAILABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN CITY HALL

Mayor Cusat had a vision of being more available and more transparent than any other government official. He created a true open-door policy in that anyone can stop by the office for a visit, ask a question, or raise a concern. In fact he had his mobile phone number, (570) Hi-Mayor, published on the front page of the newspaper. He has created social media accounts for increased direct contact. The Mayor has attended City Council Meetings, reinstated work sessions, and has scheduled public townhall meetings. To facilitate this, Mayor Cusat has created a centralized reception area that is monitored with a bi-lingual employee. This receptionist can be contacted by call or text message at the phone number (570) 459-4961 or at the email address [info@hazletoncity.org](mailto:info@hazletoncity.org). Other hotlines were created such as "text for tips", [potholes@hazletoncity.org](mailto:potholes@hazletoncity.org), [highgrass@hazletoncity.org](mailto:highgrass@hazletoncity.org), [info@hazletoncity.org](mailto:info@hazletoncity.org).

## Permanent SNOW BAN Signs Save Thousands Annually!

Recognizing that the City of Hazleton wasted thousands of dollars and hundreds of man hours each fall and spring Mayor Cusat decided to come up with a permanent solution. Not only did the former black and green neon signs lack vital information and were confusing to new residents, they were expensive and required valuable time to put and remove each snow season. Since the installation of these signs there has been a noticeable decrease in violations occurring during each snow storm. The biggest advantage that the City and its citizens have received is increased and proper snow removal times. Without the need to issue snow ban tickets the Police, Fire, and Parking Enforcement can go about normal business.