

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEETING

July 7, 2020

The virtual Council Meeting of July 7, 2020 was called to order by Council President Derrick Perry at 7:30 PM by way of the GoToMeeting.com application.

There was a **Moment of Silence** followed by the **Pledge of Allegiance**. The following Council members were connected to the online meeting:

Valerie Scott-Cooper
Thomas Lepera

Hakim Jones
Rebecca Smith

Sonya Sanders
Derrick Perry

Heather Lewis

Also present were: Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator; Chief Mark Talbot, Norristown Police Chief; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Norman Butts, Director of Finance; Amrinder Singh, Building and Codes Manager.

Motion to Approve Minutes

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilman Lepera**, to approve the Minutes of the June 16, 2020 virtual Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session Announcement

Council President Perry announced that Council met in Executive Session prior to tonight's meeting to discuss real estate matters.

Announcements

Norristown COVID Testing Site – re-opened. Monday to Friday from 10 to 12. Go to montcopa.org/COVID or call 610-970-2937.

Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium will be offering free testing at Siloam Baptist Church, 1329 Willow Street on Saturday, July 11 from 10 am to 2 pm. Masks are mandated.

Street sweeping has resumed as well as parking restrictions.

COVID-19 Rent Relief Program administered by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services with funding through the CARES Act. Applications being accepted starting July 6th through September 30th. Go to www.norristown.org for more information.

Municipal Hall opened on July 1st. Please take all COVID safety precautions.

Public Comment

Maccabee Hirsch, 1745 N. Hills Drive
Stop the sewer sale.

Kurt Martin, 245 Buttonwood St.

What are you going to do about the constant flooding at the corner of Lafayette and Buttonwood streets? The way the streets are angled when the drains fail, as they always do, it forces the water to run along the sidewalk

and into the homes on Buttonwood. I believe there should be a drain at the corner to combat the water to help save the properties from further damage.

David Repper, 1839 Powell St.

Please stop the sale of the Norristown sewage system to Aqua. Aqua is motivated only by profit, and will jack up rates while deferring maintenance. Don't let Aqua make profits on our sewer system!

Patrick McLaughlin, 554 Stanbridge St.

Don't privatize our public service. Stop the sale. Norristown Council should cancel the Aqua sale.

Kathleen McLaughlin 554, Stanbridge St.

Dear Council, do not privatize our public services!

Rachel Fecho, 715 Noble St.

I want to express my full and enthusiastic support for making Juneteenth a municipal holiday and for changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. Thank you!

I am disappointed that five of our council members failed to listen to their constituents regarding the sale of our public sewer authority to a for-profit company. I am upset that Sonya Sanders justifies the sale by saying there is no creativity in local government. I am upset that Valerie Cooper implied that Norristown citizens were a “bug in the ear” to Hakim Jones and Rebecca Smith. I am disappointed that Thomas Lepera seemed to have second thoughts, but acted like he was too new to have his own voice. We need new, young, fresh minds and voices! I am disappointed that the five who voted yes seem to be following Crandall Jones without questioning or doing the research that Hakim and Rebecca did. We need you, who know and love and are from Norristown, to do the research and make a decision based on what Norristown wants and needs. Some of you implied that we elected you to make these decisions for us. No! No way, we elected you to be our voice, not your own. So speak for us. It's not too late to change course, and we, the annoying bugs in your ears, are not going away! The public has NOT had ample opportunity to learn about and weigh in on this issue, but for the few that have, you've ignored us. For something this big, a much bigger effort should be made to inform the public and to solicit their thoughts on the matter. The three public meetings that were advertised said the purpose of the meetings was “to present the results of the detailed exploration process that the Municipality conducted over the past 2 1/2 years.” These three meetings did not present any summary of the exploration process and others options explored. These presentations were not even from the municipality or council. They were sales pitches from Aqua. The public deserves to know about the other options as thoroughly as Aqua discussed the privatization option. I know that council says there was plenty of opportunity for public input. Last meeting, Mr. Perry told me he didn't tell me anything about it during a meeting at coffee talk because it wasn't finalized yet. That's the problem! It was kept hushed until it was all but done, then advertised for the very minimum allowed by law, seven days. And for what? Why rush, especially during a pandemic when the public is stressed, distracted, and less able and likely to participate in public meetings?! Don't be railroaded and rushed by Crandall Jones, Aqua, and the too-good-to-be-true promise of quick money. Listen to your constituents, talk to us, do more research, and ask surrounding townships and municipalities how their water privatization is working out (spoiler alert: they regret it!!) Learn from their mistake. Say NOPE to privatization.

Thank you.

Appointments

Resolution 20-60: Appointment of Professional Staff

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Sanders**, to approve Resolution 20-60 to appoint Cozen O'Connor as Municipal Labor Attorney to serve in various capacities within the Municipality of Norristown. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Police

Resolution 20-51: Motion to approve or deny requests for Disabled Parking Spaces

There was a motion by Councilwoman Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Smith, to approve Resolution 20-51 to establish a Handicapped Parking Space at 1304 Arch Street and the removal of Handicapped Parking Spaces at 658 Corson Street, 120 W. Freedley Street and 1600 Locust Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 20-52: Motion to approve or deny a contract to purchase two new Police vehicles

There was a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Lewis, to approve Resolution 20-52 to purchase two 2020 Ford Interceptor SUV Police vehicles for \$33,486.48 plus \$3,500.00 for a Hybrid. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 20-53: Motion to approve or deny a contract for the upfitting of two new Police vehicles

There was a motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilwoman Lewis, to approve Resolution 20-53 to have two 2020 Ford Interceptor SUV Police vehicles upfitted. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Municipal Administrator

Resolution 20-50: Professional Services Agreement for Pre-construction and Construction Phase to Gorski Engineering, Inc.

Council held a discussion regarding the issue of diversity when hiring contractors for this project. Mr. Crandall Jones stated that approximately 98% of this contract has an opportunity for that.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, to approve Resolution 20-50 awarding a contract for \$290,316.00 (Pre-construction phase is \$69,516 / Construction phase \$221,800) plus reimbursement costs to Gorski Engineering. **The motion passed 5-2** (with Councilman Jones and Councilman Lepera voting nay.)

Resolution 20-54: Ratifying an Annual Juneteenth Independence Day recognition

There was a motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilman Jones, to approve Resolution 20-54 approving June 19th as an official Juneteenth Holiday for the Municipality of Norristown. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 20-55: Municipal Council designation of the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day

There was a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Jones, to approve Resolution 20-55 designating and approving every second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 20-56: Implementation of VoIP Telephone System

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 20-56 awarding a contract to SSI to implement a voice-over Internet protocol (VoIP) telephone system to replace the current more expensive system. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 20-57: Implementation of Office 365

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Lewis**, to approve Resolution 20-57 awarding a contract to SSI to implement cloud-based Microsoft Office 365. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 20-59: Council ratification of the Labor Agreement between the American Federation of State, County and Municipal employees, AFL-CIO District Council 88 – Crossing Guide Unit Municipality of Norristown

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 20-59 ratifying the Labor Agreement between the Municipality and American Federation of State, County and Municipal employees, AFL-CIO District Council 88 – Crossing Guide Unit, effective January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Lewis, seconded by Councilman Jones**, to open the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There was discussion among Council regarding the National League of Cities recognizing that there are communities that can't survive during the pandemic so they are advocating to the Federal Government for direct funding to cities in need.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilwoman Sanders**, to close the agenda and to send a Resolution in support of the National League of Cities application for Federal funds to help local businesses affected by the COVID pandemic. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Departmental Reports

Monthly report to update Council on June 2020 activities within presenting departments:

Finance:

Norman Butts, Finance Director, noted that the 2019 Audit is nearing completion; working on 2021-25 Capital Improvement Plan. He received info back from department heads and setting up meetings to put together a Resolution to adopt in August; preparing the 2021 Operating Budget; putting together the Second Quarter Budget Status Report – should be completed by Friday; 70% revenue from EIT, 30% Real Estate; parking revenues and expenditures are down.

Parks & Recreation:

Erica Genuardi, Parks & Recreation Manager, shared that planning continues and training (for cleaning, social distancing, interaction with children) is being done. It was Day 2 of Summer Camp (15 kids, 40 registrations.) There are daily activities and Elmwood Park Zoo on Thursdays. DCNR application complete for the Riverfront, Phase I and II and a Keystone Community Grant for Bartash in the amount of \$50,000 for playground updates, signage and ADA equipment. Playground surveys were completed and working on major park surveys. She noted that the Fall Festival will include fireworks and the concert schedule will be modified, maybe into September.

Planning & Development:

Jayne Musonye, Planning & Development Director, provided information for the following: HUD Application 2020-24 Consolidated Plan; CDBG and COVID CDBG; Consolidated Annual Performance Report; Economic Development – short term lease; 257 East Main Street is moving ahead; Parks Study Kickoff Meeting – will provide findings at a later time; Land Development application finalized; Montgomery Park Senior Housing; discussion with 400 Markley Street development regarding the County parking lot – the County is interested and will discuss; Zoning activities continue.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion to adjourn the virtual Council Meeting by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilwoman Smith. The motion passed unanimously.** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Roseann M. Santangelo, Clerk of Council