

**NORRISTOWN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 5, 2020**

The virtual Council Meeting of August 5, 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
Rebecca Smith

Hakim Jones
Derrick Perry

Thomas Lepera

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

Motion to Approve Minutes

There was a **motion by Councilman Lepera, seconded by Councilman Perry**, to approve the Minutes of the July 21, 2020 virtual Council Work Session. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session Announcement

Council President Perry announced that Council did not meet in Executive Session prior to tonight's meeting.

Announcements

Councilman Jones hosted an event at Simmons Park this past Saturday. He thanked his community partners who were able to give out diapers, produce, food and clothing to almost 300 families in the community: Mother's Mission, The Charles Foundation, Mizvah Circle Foundation, Nathaniel Robinson MD Legacy Foundation, Team Children, MLK Jr. Association for Non-Violence, Tone and Tenor Radio, NAHS Young Scholars, Norristown Votes Coalition, Garnel Hinton from Teach One Feed One, East Norriton Pharmacy, Norristown DJ Belly and Mr. John Doyle. He thanked Public Works for allowing them to use the parks.

Councilwoman Scott-Lewis said that the Census is gearing up but there have been changes made by President Trump that could cause a negative outcome to Norristown being counted. She said that there will be yard signs available next Friday to support Norristown being counted. She added that we need to get the Congressional Seats that are due us. Contact Councilwoman Scott-Cooper or Councilwoman Sanders of the Complete Count Committee for more information.

Council President Perry thanked Lisa Howdyshell and Vice President Smith for the Community Clean-Up this past weekend. Lisa Howdyshell shared what areas the clean-up took place in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity. She noted there were 125 volunteers who cleaned 1.5 miles of road, there was 1300 pounds of waste, \$3,000 in hours of volunteer labor was provided.

Public Comment

Debbie Stilley, 643 Linda Lane.

I have concerns about the cost of the proposed mural on Swede St. since we do not see the cost in the agenda. Tax payers and governments are facing a huge squeeze in the coming year or more. People are out of work and businesses are closing, which means falling

revenue. It is likely that local governments will soon have to make up for cuts at the state and federal level. While the sentiment is great, I would urge council to use more restraint in spending now so they do not have to ask us for a tax increase later. Thank you.

Mary Jo and Ed Lester, 1426 Locust St.

My husband and I have been homeowners here for 53 years and we are vehemently OPPOSED to a Black Lives Matter mural or, for that matter, any type of mural being painted on a public street in the borough. Borough administration should be apolitical and council is supposed to be unbiased and bipartisan. Shame on all of you.

Victoria Francis, 1119 Green St.

Hello,

My name is Victoria Francis and I have been informed about the proposed BLM mural project in Norristown. I have resided in Norristown my entire life and I do not believe this mural will be beneficial to our community. I am a black woman who believes in the progress of black people and that there is still work that needs to be done to help benefit everyone in society. I believe that the introduction of this mural will symbolize a group that does not genuinely believe in helping the plight of the black community. I believe that the tax dollars of the residents of Norristown should be put to better use. Those who want to support the Black Lives Matter movement are free to do so, but to use taxpayer money to do this is not fair to the community as a whole. As I have stated, I am a black woman who believes that change should happen in America, but I think the BLM movement is divisive and harmful to the black community. Please reconsider this project and have another means to support black people within our community.

Thank you for your time,
Victoria Francis

Diana Bauza, 533 Colony Drive, Collegeville

My name is Diana Bauza, and I am writing in support of a Black Lives Matter Mural in Norristown.

Ryan M. Hendel, 34 W. Main St.

If spending what little amount of money this amazing project would cost, I don't see how anyone would object to painting the words "black lives matter" on One Montgomery Plaza. I say go for it.

Julia Flannery, 234 Egypt Rd., Eagleville

I support the proposal to have a Black Lives Matter mural in Norristown. I believe people of color have been systemically marginalized and public recognition and reparation can start in our community with this art.

Grady Lights, 15 Garrett Road, Upper Darby

All of us are created equal. "American" is a US citizen's only name. "Black Lives Matter" because we all "matter" through our mothers, who lovingly endure labor pains to give us life. This is our common bond, identity & kinship.

Let's praise Mothers; never forget their burdens to deliver us into the world; remember their nurturing: the blessing which sustains living in America.

To deny that any one of us matters, diminishes Our Mothers' dignity, honor & disrespects Our American Family.

I am a committed community member. I enjoy collaborating & networking with neighborhood-based organizations to realize the promise of our great Democratic Ideals. I firmly believe that communities in partnership with art and artists can continuously create a more inclusive, equitable, and unified America.

We should all see ourselves as midwives who can deliver into the world the possibilities of freedom, equality, justice, as well as unity that our nation is so very pregnant with.

Christine Winchester Perry, 716 Noble St.

I wish to express support for the idea of a mural that supports BLM in Norristown. My only concern is to be sure there is overwhelming support for it before moving forward. I would expect that there would be in Norristown, but just in case you find there is considerable opposition, I am concerned that it can cause division and not unity. Though I support BLM as a movement, it's a complicated issue, especially with its perceived connection to violence and rioting. I would support a mural that in some way emphasized the use of peaceful protest and non-violence.

Sheridan Earle, 1709 W. Marshall St.

I would like to offer my public support for the BLM mural consideration.

Rita Smith, 916 Dogwood Lane, Eagleville

Dear Norristown Municipal Council Members,

Thank you for taking into consideration my response to the Black Lives Matter mural.

I am not in favor of a dangerous marxist group such as Black Lives Matter, defacing our community!

Thaddeus Peay II, 208 E. Elm St.

Good evening my name is Thaddaeus C. Peay II and I am the Vice-President of the United Men Of Color Association. I believe it is important that Norristown creates a black lives matter mural across from the court house. The mural is a sign of what Norristown stands for as a community. Norristown believes and knows black lives matter and we should not be ashamed to display it for all to see.

Kristin Kori, 829 Noble St.

I am concerned about the proposal of painting a street and singling out one group of people in our community. Norristown is an ethnically diverse community. And I believe this resolution breeds division rather than unity in Norristown. Truly all lives matter: blacks, browns, whites. All skin colors matter for we are all made in the image of our Creator and Sustainer.

The Black Lives Matter movement seems to be fueled by Black Lives Matter (BLM), the organization. By painting the “Black Lives Matter” slogan on our street, do we not as a community align ourselves with this organization in some fashion?

Yet, from my research, I have learned that this organization is not really for the black community. If BLM were for the black community, it would not support Planned Parenthood, an organization responsible for devastating the black community through abortion. I understand that in 2011 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released an Abortion Surveillance Report. Black women had the highest ratio of any group in the country. (Please note: Time did not allow for further research to report more recent stats.)

BLM is against the nuclear family as quoted from their website: “We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement.” Yet studies show that fatherlessness is a key contributor to a problem ravaging our nation. The statistics show “that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison” (quoted from President Obama’s 2008 Father’s Day speech).

Does Norristown leadership really want to jump on the “Black Lives Matter” movement bandwagon and align our community with the Black Lives Matter organization?

On top of that, I’m concerned this resolution implies the Norristown Police Department does not value the lives of black Norristonians. Having participated in the Norristown Police Department’s Citizen Police Academy, I find it hard to believe that our police department devalues any particular people group in Norristown.

If the leaders of Norristown want to truly invest in improving our community for blacks and browns and whites and all possible skin colors, then I strongly encourage you to more wisely steward taxpayer dollars to address the root of the perceived problem.

If the leaders of Norristown really believe that black lives matter, then funds would be invested in building up the family, not dividing a community through the elevation of one people group over another by painting our streets with the “Black Lives Matter” slogan.

Thank you in advance for considering my concerns.

Municipal Administrator

Resolution No. 20-69: Resolution in support of the “Black Lives Matter” movement and installation of a “Black Lives Matter” painting on Swede Street between 425 Swede Street and the Montgomery County Courthouse

Mr. Crandall Jones explained the options available and noted that if Council decided on a mural, they would need a Conditional Use permit. He added that the County provided information regarding the construction in that area and he was advised that the construction will be able to move away from the portion of Swede Street in front of the One Montgomery Plaza building but he is awaiting more detailed information from the County.

There was a **motion by Councilman Jones, seconded by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper**, to support the “Black Lives Matter” movement and installation of a “Black Lives Matter” painting on Swede Street between 425 Swede Street and the Montgomery County Courthouse. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Police

Ordinance No. 20-12: Request for Council to approve the amendment of Chapter 305, Article II, Section 305-12 relating to one-way streets

Chief Talbot provided an explanation of the amendment.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilman Jones**, to add a portion of Green Street, Wayne Avenue, Rex Alley and Scott Alley to Chapter 305, Article II, Section 305-12 titled, “One Way Streets” and remove portions of Ford Street, Moore Street and East Penn Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution No. 20-68: Motion to approve requests for Disabled Parking Spaces to establish Handicapped Parking Spaces at the following addresses:

1220 Tyler Street
1228 Pine Street
731 Astor Street
29 Stanbridge Street

Chief Talbot noted that these residents demonstrated physical limitations that justify the need for the Spaces.

There was a **motion by Councilman Jones, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve the requests for the Handicapped Parking Spaces. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Departmental Reports

Monthly Reports to update Council on July 2020 activities within presenting departments:

Administration

Mr. Jones provided information regarding former experience with the “Ready for 100” and the affiliation with the Sierra Club. Mr. Jones, who is a member of the Montgomery County Managers Consortium of Communities, noted they had a conversation that the issue is not just renewable energy, it’s also climate change. In 2019, he met with the Montgomery County Planning Commission and the Delaware Valley Planning Commission to discuss these issues. There was a group application made for various state entities for joint group funding. Tomorrow he should have Press Release details regarding the creation of strategies that all communities can take back to their prospective parties. Council can choose the strategies they want to use.

He also reported that there are regular meetings regarding the Municipal building renovations. He noted they are proposing to move out earlier than planned due to HVAC system issues so an RFP is being put together to put in place a process to remedy the failing of the system but would still allow heating and cooling for the Finance and Police departments so the sooner the move, the sooner the process can be started.

Mr. Jones noted that the 5 year CIP is finishing up and that he will have a first draft proposal on Friday for Council review.

He stated that the Operating Budget timetable should be ready for adoption in November.

He shared that Councilwoman Scott-Cooper and Congresswoman Madeleine Dean toured some of the businesses in downtown, including the Innovation Center and the Willow School with Kym Ramsey.

There are ongoing conversations with lobbyist Rocco Pugliese regarding RACP authorizations that are in the budget that the Governor signed with \$15 million in notations for the Economic Development project at Main and Dekalb Streets and for the Recreation Center Redevelopment project. Previous lobbyist Lois Haggerty had acquired \$2 million in RACP funds for a new Firehouse. He noted that many communities are competing for the money so the amounts awarded could be lower.

The State Hospital monthly project meetings continue and a contractor could be chosen by August.

Public Works

Mr. Odenigbo shared information about alley paving, stormwater inlet cleaning, storm damage clean-up and the ongoing issue of illegal dumping.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion to adjourn the virtual Council Meeting by Councilman Jones, 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