

**NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 2, 2021**

The Council Meeting of March 2, 2021 was called to order by Council President Derrick Perry at 7:30 PM by way of the virtual gotomeeting.com application.

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

Valerie Moman	Hakim Jones	Sonya Sanders	Heather Lewis
Rebecca Smith	Thomas Lepera	Derrick Perry	

Also signed in were: Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator; Chief Mark Talbot, Norristown Police Chief; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Amrinder Singh, Code Manager; Norristown Fire Chief Thomas O'Donnell.

Motion to approve Minutes

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Lepera, seconded by Councilwoman Moman**, to approve the Minutes from February 16, 2021. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session

Council did not meet in Executive Session.

Announcements

Congresswoman Dean will host a Telephone Town Hall on Thursday, March 4th at 7 pm.

Amrinder Singh, Code Manager, was named by the Governor as a member of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code Review and Advisory Council.

Public Comment

Stefanie Ruia, 117 Hartranft Ave.

Dear Respected Members of the Municipality of Norristown,

My name is Stefanie Ruia. I am the property owner of 117 Hartranft Ave. Between my beloved father and myself we have owned this home for decades. Many other homeowners on this street and area have also owned their properties for decades.

I am addressing the Alley between Hartranft and Rosemont avenues. Everyone has agreed for years, this alley is classified as a street. Code will know the answer. The homes touching this alley were specifically built with driveways to accommodate the homes that use off street parking.

Going on six years this alley has been turned into a very public playground: there are four basketball nets, in the beginning there were five basketball nets and a huge swing over the alley on a tree that was ordered by code to be cut back a year or two ago. The nets have been blocking entrances of the alley and actually split the alley in half with three basketball nets concentrated at the top of the alley. They have been there everyday for five years, until 10 p.m. at night, sometimes later.

This public playground has attracted 50 to 100 minors of all ages. My concern has always been the safety and well-being of the children. These children have been given so many mixed messages, they've been abandoned in this alley with no one taking responsibility, no parental supervision. The parental supervision given was only to rile the kids up and add to the public playground. These children, of course, have become violent, physically threatening homeowners, property damage, gunfire down Hartranft Avenue, and some of

these children are driving now.

This very public playground has destroyed our lives. The residents of these two streets have had every civil liberty taken from us. We have no quality of life. All of these minors have literally taken over our properties and streets. They have taken over our yards. There are no property lines here. The noise of this public playground can only be compared to a war zone. The ground shakes, windows have rattled every day for 5 years. The residents literally hide in their homes to get away from the noise and to avoid any contact with these minors. Even the little children have adopted this behavior.

Everything here has been done with a bully mentality. Teaching all the children the same bully mentality. This has spread like a virus all over this area, all of Norristown and surrounding areas. Through the schools.

I love Philadelphia and Philadelphians! Unfortunately there has been a devastating Philadelphia effect. Let me be clear: Norristown has had a devastating effect, too. We are all suffering.

There is no excuse for this. All of this was done with no permits, no permission or authority. On no planet should this have ever happened. All the residents here have severe PTSD, anxiety, depression. You have publicly shamed all the residents by allowing this to continue through all these years. You have allowed peoples' lives to be ruined.

The Norristown Police Department at no time had the power to stop this. The officers have been respectful to everyone. We proudly support the Norristown Police Department.

I demand the alley be brought to Code immediately.

I demand an immediate investigation of both the Municipality of Norristown and the Norristown Police Department. I demand Chief of Police Mark Talbot and both lieutenants be put on immediate leave. I demand The president of Municipal Council, Derrick Perry, be removed from his position. His email to me was the most unprofessional response I've ever received in my life. It was a 10-edged sword (*sic*). I am enraged and appalled. No citizen of Norristown should ever be treated the way this municipality has treated its citizens. I demand full oversight, disclosure to the public and responsibility from this Municipality. I demand the proper departments in Philadelphia be contacted and held responsible. The people of Philadelphia need help.

I have contacted Congresswoman Dean's aide as well as State Rep. Bradford's aide. I have also contacted the Norristown school superintendent's office. My absolute concern is for these children who have been given so many mixed messages, race becoming an issue when race was never an issue (we are a melting pot here always have been for decades and generations). These children have a blurred sense of reality. The children are in trouble. The concern needs to be the children. The negative mental effect will last through these children's lives. As well as all the residents. This needs to be handled with focus on all of our mental abuse, and mental health being the focus. This is like a virus spreading, we must stop this. This is a mental pandemic.

Let me be clear. I blame this on the parents, too.

The Municipality of Norristown has held us in a constant state of torture. It is inhumane.

Respectfully
Stefanie Ruia

There was no Public Comment during the meeting.

Appointments

Resolution 20-21: Civil Service Appointments

There was a motion by Councilwoman Moman, seconded by Council Vice President Lepera, to appoint:

Civil Service Commission:

Nadine Hitch
Lauren Hughes

Commissioner
Alternate

Term expiring 12/31/24
Term expiring 12/31/25

Planning Commission:

Precious Thompson
Denise Hall
Joseph Stabler

The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 21-24: Appointment of Management Staff

There was a motion by Councilwoman Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Smith, to appoint Kathy Pfister as Municipal Director of Finance and Tax Collector. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Municipal Administrator

Resolution 21-23: A Resolution urging the PA Legislature and Governor to pass legislation allowing Municipalities to establish their own local Minimum Wage

There was a motion by Council Vice President Lepera, seconded by Councilwoman Smith, to approve Resolution 21-23. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request for Municipal Council approval of Assessment Appeal Stipulations agreed upon by the Norristown Area School District

There was a motion by Council Vice President Lepera, seconded by Councilman Jones, to approve Assessment Appeal Stipulations for 320 Johnson Highway in the amount of \$7,434.24, 910 East Main Street in the amount of \$45,461.04 and 607 Calamia Drive in the amount of \$5,732.10 that have been agreed upon by NASD, the County, the Taxpayer and the Board of Assessments. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Municipal Engineer's MS4 Public Update

Khal Hassan, Municipal Engineer, provided details about a new permit, control measures and mention of upcoming events posted on the Municipal website.

Resolution 21-22: Municipal Hall additions and renovations – awarding bids for General Construction, HVAC and Electrical

Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator, provided information regarding the bid process.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Sanders, seconded by Councilwoman Moman, to award contracts to:

- S&S Electrical Services, Inc. in the amount of \$140,000 for general contractor services.
- Hirschberg Mechanical in the amount of \$74,530 for HVAC services.
- MJF Electrical Contracting, Inc. in the amount of \$40,000 for electrical services.

The motion passed unanimously.

Request for Municipal Council to approve the advertisement of Ordinance 21-05: Ordination and acceptance of Lafayette Street into the Official Plan of the Streets of the Municipality of Norristown

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Moman, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve the advertisement of Ordinance 21-05, ordaining the tracts of land described in the Resolution to extend Lafayette Street as a public street, a private access easement and a drainage easement in the Municipality of Norristown. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Council Vice President Lepera took over the meeting.

Building & Codes Enforcement

Historical Architectural Review Board – February 2021

Code Manager, Amrinder Singh, stated that the HARB applications for February were for the following properties:

342 West Marshall Street
828 West Main Street
1201 Dekalb Street

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Council President Perry**, to approve the HARB applications that were received, reviewed and recommended for approval by the HARB. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Planning & Municipal Development

Arch Street Greenway Project Phase I – Intent to Award

Planning Director, Jayne Musonye, provided the project details which includes road signs, lights, sidewalk, curbs, landscaping and site restoration.

There was a **motion by Council President Perry, seconded by Councilwoman Moman**, to approve the Intent to Award letter to G&B Construction of Willow Grove, PA, the apparent low bidder, in the amount of \$177,836.00 for the base bid of the Arch Street Greenway Project Phase I. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Departmental Reports

Monthly reports to update Council on January 2021 activities within the presenting departments.

Police: Chief Talbot shared there was an arrest in the Mama Venezia robbery; crimes versus 7 years prior is trending positive (2007-2013 versus 2014-2020 52% drop in violent crimes and a 44% drop in serious crimes); a spike in auto thefts. **Priorities:** drive down gun violence and traffic safety.

Fire: Chief O'Donnell noted the department responded to 179 alarms; training session for 112; 1 firefighter injury; 26 inspections; 9 Public Education projects and 13 smoke detectors were installed.

Code Enforcement: Mr. Singh shared that the 2020 Annual Report will be forwarded to the Municipal Administrator to be shared at the next Council Workshop Meeting. He noted that permits are being approved since some restrictions have been lifted for construction; issuance of snow/ice and trash citations. He noted there will be more details in the Annual Report.

Adjournment

There was **a motion by Council President Perry, seconded by Councilwoman Lewis,** to adjourn the Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo, Clerk of Council