

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 7, 2023

The Council Meeting of March 7, 2023 was called to order by Council President, Thomas Lepera, at 6:30 PM in the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit 23, 2 West Lafayette Street, 1st Floor, Norristown, PA 19401.

There was a **Moment of Silence** followed by the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

The following Council members were in attendance:

Rebecca Smith
Tiffany Hendley
Lauren Hughes
Dustin Queenan
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator; Acting Chief Michael Bishop, Norristown Police Department; Courtney Richardson, Acting Municipal Solicitor; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Thomas O'Donnell, Norristown Fire Chief; Amrinder Singh, Codes Manager; Ted Dymtryk, Pennoni Engineer; Erica Genardi, Director of Parks & Recreation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the Minutes of the February 21, 2023 Council Meeting. **The motion passed 5-0.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Lepera announced that Council met in Executive Session to discuss litigation issues.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street – He said things were put on hold because of news of the Ohio train crash. He said that if the same happens with Norfolk Southern, it will be a catastrophe. He blames the 1980 deregulation for creating problems such as the axel issue. He added that the damage from the crash may require a National Hazardous Mitigation Plan and he hopes it doesn't happen here and pose a danger to the drinking water. He added that he had a meeting with Greg Scott regarding several Norristown issues. He admired the County for their donation to the Homeless.

Jennifer Choe, 503 Barbados Street – She read from a handwritten letter asking if a permanent sign for “No Littering \$300 Fine” could be placed at Barbados & Airy Streets. She also suggested a traffic light because of drivers coming from Barbados Street. She said the extended green light at Airy causes issues with drivers turning right at Airy Street. She also said there is an issue with parking at Barbados & Airy.

Ladonna Rose, 1229 Oakwood Avenue – Ms. Rose said she is a 22 year resident in Norristown who owns her home. She said that Council is too lax on some issues such as allowing drivers to go through Stop Signs. She complained about a trash issue at an apartment building on West Marshall Street where she said they receive many notices. She asked why do they have so many chances? She said that Norristown is saying “it’s ok.”

Rochelle Brown, 622 E. Moore Street – She said there are junk cars on the property next to her and she can’t put up her fence. She said it’s been 7 years and no one has followed up with her.

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 23-18: Request for Preliminary/Final Land Development approval – Elmwood Park Zoo Welcome Center

Director Jayne Musonye provided an outline of the timeline to this point. Al Zone, Zoo Director, noted this Phase consists of a sculptor, exhibit and a Veterinary Hospital. Ted Dymtryk, Municipal Engineer, reviewed the 8 Waivers and had no objections.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve the request for a Preliminary/Final Land Development for the Elmwood Park Zoo Welcome Center. **The motion passed 5-0.**

FIRE

Resolution 23-17: Requesting Council approval to apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve the hiring of six additional full-time Firefighters to enhance the safety of our citizens. **The motion passed 5-0.**

Resolution 23-16: Requesting Municipal Council approval to apply for Assistance to Firefighter AFG Grant (AFG)

Fire Chief O’Donnell explained that this is for removing contaminants. He said the Grant has a match which is included in the Operating Budget.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the award of an Assistance to Firefighter AFG Grant in order to purchase a washer/extractor and turnout gear drying system in the amount of \$24,500.00. **The motion passed 5-0.**

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Ordinance 23-01: Request Council approval of a Franchise Renewal Agreement between Verizon and the Municipality of Norristown

Crandall Jones explained this is for a 5-year Franchise Renewal with \$21,335 provided to the Municipality within 90 days for equipment to broadcast with no sports programming. He added that Verizon would need to give 12 months' notice to end the Agreement.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Ordinance 23-01 for the negotiated Franchise Renewal Agreement between the Municipality and Verizon Pennsylvania LLC, which retains many of the benefits of the original agreement, despite recent challenges experienced by the cable industry. **The motion passed 5-0.**

Municipal Council motion to approve Opioid Settlement CL-388028 Class Action Litigation Suit

Crandall Jones explained that this was brought on by the State. If approved by Council, the Municipality needs to submit documents by April 18, 2023 to receive a portion of the fees.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve the Opioid Settlement CL-388028 Class Action Litigation Suit. **The motion passed 5-0.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police

Acting Police Chief, Michael Bishop, reported there were 3,504 calls received in January and 3,086 received in February; there were 64 Part I Crimes; 0 Fatal/Non-Fatal; 70% decrease in robberies; a carjacking arrest was made; increase in domestic violence. There were 9 Community events; 64% decrease in traffic crashes; 4 additional Officers were hired bringing the total to 66.

Fire

Fire Chief O'Donnell reported there were 93 dispatches; average response time was 4 minutes 36 seconds; busiest time Monday 6 pm; Departmental Training: 85 classes, 197 hours; no Civil or Firefighter injuries; 70 inspections; 80 visits, 13 installations of fire extinguishers.

Code Manager, Amrinder Singh, reported year-to-date 565 Contractors' registrations and licenses; rental licenses were mailed out; report to Council regarding Rental Inspections; 2,250 lead-free or lead-safe properties; 19.5% increase in property transfers for January and February; 239 Quality-of-Life tickets issued; 230 permits issued through February; 93% staff.

ADJOURNMENT

There was **a motion by Council Vice President Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to adjourn the Council Meeting. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo