

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 6, 2023

The Council Work Session of June 6, 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
Rashaad Bates
Lauren Hughes
Tiffani Hendley
Dustin Queenan
Heather Lewis
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator; Acting Chief Michael Bishop, Norristown Police Department; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Thomas O'Donnell, Norristown Fire Chief; Amrinder Singh, Codes Manager; Erica Genuardi, Director of Parks and Recreation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve the Minutes of the May 17, 2023 Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Lepera announced that Council did not meet in Executive Session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Oak Street Basketball League. Register by June 17th. \$45 per player.

"SRC Idol" June 17th. 3 on 3 Basketball and Talent Show. Sponsored by Rotation Records. Special guest judges.

Juneteenth Jubilee Street Festival – Monday, June 19, 2023 from 12 to 6 pm . Dekalb & Main Streets.

Norristown Public Library Summer Reading Program. “Big Truck Day” on June 17th.

President Thomas Lepera took time to clarify the news article regarding his comments on the Homelessness issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street – Mr. Watters provided his CLA Report. He said there is a Vietnam Veterans meeting at the Jefferson Fire House. He said that Resolutions are needed to help the homeless Veterans. He shared about the “Adopt a Spot” program to help keep Norristown beautiful. He said he did an inventory of the boarded-up homes. He said that the question remains, “Who is responsible for the accuracy of the Norristown Property Records?”

Mike Kingsley, 1151 Sterigere Street – He said he represents the Coalition to Save Lives. He said the homelessness problem is country-wide. He said that one place to start is to love the people.

Michael Board, 1013 Bill Smith Blvd. – He said he’s lived in Norristown for over 7 years. He is a recent Pastor and he is looking to be part of the solution for the homeless. He said he took college students to a tent community and they would love to connect with them.

David Schiller, 530 Swede Street – Mr. Schiller is an attorney on the 500 block of Swede Street. He said behind his office is a Hospitality Center. He said that 34 attorneys near him have left because of issues such as people sleeping in their parking lot. He said that business people will leave if it doesn’t get better. He said we need to work together for a solution.

Eric Donovan – Chief Operating Officer, Elmwood Park Zoo - he was there on behalf of Al Zone, Elmwood Park Zoo Director, who is out of town. Mr. Donovan read a statement that Mr. Zone wrote to Council regarding the homelessness issue which stated that there are homeless on the zoo property which poses liability and safety issues for everyone. He wants to support a solution that will protect the property, the guests and the animals while ensuring treating the homeless with the dignity and care they deserve.

Timothy Kozak, 819 Stanbridge Street – Mr. Kozak had issues he presented to President Lepera about his comments. He had items to present such as the book, “The Man Who Never Died.”

Linda Smith, 218 Nassau Place – Ms. Smith said she is a 30-year resident. She commented to Council, “You were elected to represent all constituents. They’re all human.”

Mayeli Chanez, 402 Marshall Street – She owns an ice cream shop and she said that the Latino Business Coalition gets no support from Norristown. She received a letter from Code regarding having a table outside her business to sell some items but it was in English. She said she needs clarification.

Denisse Asuoto, 335 West Marshall Street – She said she met with Norristown’s Event Coordinator and was given an events calendar only to find that none of the Latino Business events were listed on there.

David McMahon, 721 Haws Avenue – He said there are answers out there to the problems such as a Housing Trust Fund. He said we need more Marshall Streets.

Mike Hays, 330 W. 3rd Street – He’s from the “Montco 30% Project.” He quoted, “Being poor shouldn’t feel like a crime.” He proposed there are solutions such as maps of areas for the homeless, passing an Inclusionary Housing Unit law. He said that all 62 counties in PA should work together.

Kayur Popat, 1903 Dekalb Street – Mr. Popat is a local business owner. He said the attention from the article was meant to sensationalize. He said this is a global crisis. He said we now need to move forward but there is no simple answer.

Steve Grosswald, 105 N. 16th – He said he is Executive Director of “Mission Philadelphia” to end hunger and homelessness by July 2026. He said this is everyone’s problem. He said there are 5 pillars in his organization. He said that the state and national representatives need to be involved. He said he will help with the solution.

Jane Pekol, 726 E. Marshall Street – She directed her comments to President Lepera asking about some of his comments and whether or not they were fabricated. She said she doesn’t believe there is no intention of “sweeps” of the homeless and she believes the bonds of trust have been broken.

John Fennell, 20 E. Spruce Street – Mr. Fennell said he has worked with some of the Council members before. He is now a resident and is concerned about the lack of resources. He had a bad experience with the homeless at his home. He said he will not subsidize that lifestyle.

Ana Santoyo, 1230 Astor Street – She said she is a licensed clinical social worker on the Board at the Hospitality Center. She said that housing for all is possible. She suggested that the Citizens Leadership Academy develop the policies needed.

Council Vice President Lewis made comments related to the notes she took during the Public Comments including the fact that she is 20 years in non-profit. She said that 2-1-1 needs assessment and she shared how the Call Center determines the needs of those who call.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

A Public Hearing and Final Adoption of Ordinance 23-04: Municipal Stormwater Management Ordinance revisions to Chapter 276

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to open the Public Hearing. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Solicitor Kilkenny entered the Exhibits: M1 Advertisement, M2 copy of Ordinance, M3 Comments

Crandall Jones stated that the changes to the Stormwater Ordinance are mandated by the changes in the State law.

Khal Hassan, Pennoni Engineering, provided information about the origin of the Stormwater Ordinance, including adoption, text change, additions, modified requirements.

Public Comment - None.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to close the Public Hearing. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Ordinance 23-04 Stormwater Management Ordinance revisions. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 23-37: request of Municipal Council to approve Change Orders that total \$63,987.16 from Baver Construction for modifications of the Sprinkler System for Municipal Hall renovations.

Crandall Jones explained that the electrical and IT rooms need modifying.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 23-37. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 23-38: request of Municipal Council to approve Change Orders in the amount of \$29,800 from Plymouth Environmental Company for Municipal Hall renovations.

Crandall Jones noted that hazardous material was found in the stairs.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve Resolution 23-38 for required lead abatement work. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 23-39: request of Municipal Council to approve value added engineering services in the amount of \$36,545 to Seiler & Drury Architecture for Municipal Hall renovations.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 23-39 which includes an increased scope of services and required revisions to the original project. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 23-40: request of Municipal Council to approve a purchase in the amount of \$23,252.60 from Systems Solutions, Inc. for Networking Equipment at Municipal Hall

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve Resolution 23-40 for networking equipment proposed by Systems Solutions, Inc. including a CBS350 Managed 48-port system which will allow for improved connectivity for the Norristown Police Department and Emergency Services Teams and all Municipal departments/employees. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 23-41: recognizing June 2023 as LGBTQ+ Pride Month

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to recognize June 2023 as LGBTQ+ Pride Month. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 23-42: request Council approval of Intent to Award letter to Gordian/S.J. Thomas Company, Inc. (GC) and MERCO Engineering Contractors (Subcontractors) in the amount of \$235,920 for repair of the Crawford Park/Pearl Street retaining wall.

Crandall Jones explained that discussions took too long and the original vendor backed out. Khal Hassan, Municipal Engineer, explained that the proposal was submitted and the scope will be maintained. He noted that ARPA Funds were used.

There was **a motion by Council Vice President Lewis, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 23-42 to issue an Intent to Award letter to the selected contractors for repair of the Crawford Park retaining wall. **The motion passed unanimously.**

BUILDINGS & CODE COMPLIANCE

Historical Architectural Review Board – May 2023

Code Manager, Amrinder Singh, provided the information for applications received for repairs and renovations that were reviewed and recommended by the HARB in compliance with the Buildings & Code Ordinance. The addresses are:

47	E. Jacoby Street
118-120	W. Main Street
311	W. Marshall Street
800	W. Main Street
1021	W. Main Street
1023	W. Main Street
1215	Dekalb Street
1339	Dekalb Street

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the HARB applications. **The motion passed unanimously.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police

Acting Chief Bishop reported there was a 10% decrease in crime from last year. In May, there were 3,974 calls. 80% decrease in homicides, 86% decrease in shootings, 30% decrease in shots fired, 30% decrease in vehicle thefts, 34% decrease in robberies, 16% decrease in burglaries, 12% decrease in thefts and 7% decrease in aggravated assaults. He said there has been car break-ins because of a Tik Tok challenge and that there are steering wheel locks available at the Police Station with proof of residency and proof of car type.

Fire

100 Service Calls – 442 YTD, average response time is 4 minutes 28 seconds, busiest time is Thursday at 7 pm, 479 department training classes, YTD training hours 2,059, 2 Firefighter injuries, 1 Civilian injury, 0 fatalities, 175 commercial fire inspections, 94 Public Education events, visited 541 homes to install smoke detectors and 142 had them already installed.

Code

There were 329 exterior property inspections and 329 tickets were issued – 1,241 YTD, 141 Building Permits issued – 595 YTD, 30 Rental Unit inspections – 1,008 YTD, 73 Transfer Inspections - 384 YTD. The department is working on filling 3 vacant positions – 1 Permit Tech and 2 Code Compliance Inspectors.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to adjourn the Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo