

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

The Council Work Session of September 19, 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
Dustin Queenan
Lauren Hughes
Heather Lewis
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Municipal Administrator, Crandall Jones; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Acting Police Chief, Michael Bishop; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Amande Ciarlante, Assistant Director of Finance; Thomas O'Donnell, Norristown Fire Chief; Assistant Fire Chief, Richard Lockart; Amrinder Singh, Codes Manager; Erica Genuardi, Director of Parks and Recreation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Lewis, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the Minutes of the September 5, 2023 Council Meeting. **The motion passed 6-0.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

"Trunk or Treat" 10-year Anniversary. October 31, 2023 from 4 pm to 7 pm at the Norristown Recreation Center. Contact Council Vice President Lewis hlewis@norristown.org or Tracie Henry, Special Events Coordinator thenry@norristown.org.

Fall Basketball: Evaluations on October 18, 19, 25, 26, games at Eisenhower. \$40 per player. Ages 8-10, 11-13, 14-16. League: Monday and Wednesday October 2 through November 8.

Re-Entry Simulation at the Montgomery County Public Safety Training Campus on Thursday, September 28 from 1 pm to 4 pm.

“International Day of Peace Walk” on September 23rd from 10 am to 4 pm. Hosted by Restorative Norristown on Arts Hill. “Rotation Records,” vonC tour. Contact yojam1441@gmail.com.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Hayes, Bridgeport – Mr. Hayes read from a press release regarding the City Wide Sweep of the homeless. He read excerpts from emails from 2022-23 sent by the NPD and emails between Municipal administration, the Police Department and Public Works. Mr. Hayes said this isn’t transparency but a PR spin.

Alma Flores – 335 E. Marshall Street – Ms. Flores was joined by an interpreter. She thanked Council for their support of the recent Hispanic Heritage Month Festival on Marshall Street.

Francia Delgado – 335 E. Marshall Street – Also joined by an interpreter, Ms. Delgado thanked Council for closing off Main Street for the event on Marshall Street which had about 50 vendors and 4,000-5,000 attendees.

Denisse A. – 335 E. Marshall Street – Denisse thanked Councilwoman Hughes for attending the event.

Olivia Brady, 728 Stanbridge Street – Ms. Brady commented that saving buildings creates money and open space doesn’t make money. She said that historic preservation makes sense. She shared that there’s an online list of 24 Reasons why it makes sense, some being jobs and small business and there’s more tax revenue with revitalization.

Peggy Dellisanti – She said “there’s a cash cow on your hands that the County wants to erase.”

Cassandra Morabito, 210 East Fornance Street – She asked why the prison building was never put up for sale. She added that the first floor can be used for business and the second, third and fourth floors for event spaces.

David McMahon, 721 Haws Avenue – He said there will be a panel discussion about the prison building on October 12th at Theatre Horizon from 6:30 to 8:30 pm – one hour panel discussion and one hour Q&A. The history of incarceration will be discussed as well as future re-use. He said that Nicole from the Sentencing Project will be taking part. More information to come.

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street – He said a study was done in 2000 regarding the prison building being made open to the public. He said he made a video in 2004 about the history. He said the Commissioners at that time did nothing about the building.

Pauline Braccio, Towamencin Twp. – She said the only thing to discuss is why does Kenneth Lawrence wants the prison building down? She said her friend and Norristown resident, Doris Smith-Starks, is upset about it. She said Kenneth Lawrence did nothing about the homeless.

Guiseppe Craney-Monticelli, Springfield – He said that there must be poltergeist activity in the old mens prison. He said that people died due to the injustice of the County. He said that no medical treatment was given. He commented that the building is a living day Picasso. He also commented that the Firefighters are amazing. He commented that the speed limit change is a revenue generation.

Jane Pekol, 726 E. Marshall Street – Ms. Pekol read an email regarding the homeless situation from Mr. Camuso, Regional Director of PA Resources for Human Development asking to partner with Norristown to fill in gaps in services.

Council President Lepera commented that 4 to 8 years ago, Council begged for help from the Commissioners and other communities on this issue because Council knew of the closing of the State Hospital shelter. He said they got zero response. He said to check those emails.

PRESENTATIONS

Recognition of Firefighters for life-saving incident

Council Vice President Lewis read the commendations for the Norristown Firefighters involved in a life-saving incident where they saved the life of a construction worker on August 2, 2023. The Firefighters are: Assistant Chief Chris Cossman, Capt. Matthew Gallagher, FF Robert Spitko, FF Andrew McIntyre, FF Charles Scott, FF Bret Baker, FF Bill Ronayne.

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 23-61: to award a contract to Colicchio Consulting in the amount of \$32,500 for Food Hall Feasibility & Planning Consulting Services for the ground floor at 1 West Main Street

There was a Power Point presentation by Sean Turner, Assistant Director of Planning. The Power Point included the timeline of 1 West Main Street from 1989 to the present.

Ed Eimer, Eimer Architecture/Interiors, presented information about Food Hall-specific projects. He said the site (1 West Main Street) can work architecturally.

Phil Colicchio, Executive Managing Director, Feasibility and Performance for Cushman & Wakefield, is involved as the Attorney and Consultant. He explained what a Food Hall is not, the social and economic value, to fund or not fund a project, detailed market study, floor plan, expected revenue, space needed for programming. He noted that the Food Hall movement is significant.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Queenan, to approve Resolution 23-61. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 23-62: authorizing the submission of a grant application to PennDOT requesting \$1.5 million in funding from the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) grant program

Director Jayne Musonye explained that this grant came about and could be used to help complete phases III and IV of the Arch Street Greenway Project. She said that \$1.8 million is estimated to get to the Airy Street phase of the Arch Street Greenway Project, which includes curbs, trees, sidewalks, etc.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Resolution 23-62. **The motion passed 6-0.**

PUBLIC WORKS

Request of Municipal Council to advertise Ordinance 23-07 of the Municipality of Norristown, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, amending Chapter 305 titled "Vehicles and Traffic," Article II, Section 305-7, titled "Speed Limits" of the Norristown Municipal Code to reduce the Speed Limit along Dekalb Street to 25 MPH; authorizing the posting of appropriate signs; providing a Severability Clause; and providing an effective date

Acting Chief Bishop explained that the signs will be posted between Fornance Street and Johnson Highway. He noted that a 2-way Dekalb Street is in the County plan. Councilwoman Smith asked if a stop light could be put at Brown & Dekalb Street because of so many accidents happening there. Chief Bishop said that it doesn't warrant a stop light according to a study. He provided the factors.

Chief Bishop said that the change in the Speed Limit needs to be advertised.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Presentation to and request of Municipal Council to renew the Memorandum of Understanding with the Norristown Chamber of Commerce for a period of three (3) years

Kim Ramsey, Chief Experience Office, Chamber of Commerce, presented a Power Point highlighting such items as Our Mission, Our Vision and History. There were also highlights of the Chamber of Commerce achievements and future plans such as: redefine the Norristown experience; encompass all of Norristown in the planning; foster destination locations throughout the Municipality; partner with the Municipality to create and re-establish districts in the Municipality (the SoMa District (South of Marshall) and Norristown Arts Hill; partner with the Municipality to attract new, diverse businesses and developments.

Request for Municipal Council approval of Assessment Appeal Stipulations agreed upon by the Norristown Area School District and property owners at 228-230 W. Main Street, Norristown for Montgomery County Court Docket 2021-23188

Crandall Jones noted that the amount of the Assessment Appeal Stipulation is \$1,391.50.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the Assessment Appeal Stipulation agreed upon by the taxpayer and the NASD for reclamation of delinquent taxes for 228-230 W. Main Street, Norristown. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 23-63: requesting Municipal Council approve the purchase of signage from iSIGN Architectural Signage in the amount of \$22,500 for Municipal Hall

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve Resolution 23-63 for one large exterior backlit aluminum sign for the back parking lot entrance of Municipal Hall and an interior sign for Council Chambers to complete renovations and direct the public. **The motion passed 6-0.**

BUILDING & CODES ENFORCEMENT

Resolution 23-60: to approve a new Professional Services Agreement with MuniReg, LLC for Foreclosure Property Registration and related services

Amrinder Singh noted that the vendor went bankrupt and he met with the Municipal Administrator and the Municipal Solicitor to review new proposals. He said the “best fit” is MuniReg, LLC. He said they also provide a local contact.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the Agreement with MuniReg, LLC. **The motion passed 6-0.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo