

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 5, 2023

The Council Meeting of December 5, 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
Dustin Queenan
Tiffani Hendley
Heather Lewis
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Municipal Administrator, Crandall Jones; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Chief Michael Bishop, Acting Police Chief; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Thomas O'Donnell, Norristown Fire Chief; Amrinder Singh, Codes Manager; Bri'Ana Cropps-Hawkins, Recreation Director.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator, pointed out that a correction is needed in the November 21st Minutes on page 5 in the first paragraph. The name should read Alyssa Fields.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Council Vice President Lewis**, to approve the Minutes of the November 21, 2023 Council Meeting with the correction. **The motion passed 5-0.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Norristown Winter Fair – Saturday, December 9th from 1-7 pm at the Recreation Center. There will be rides and games, photos with Santa, food, drinks and holiday music.

Holiday Toy Event at the George Washington Carver Community Center – Sunday, December 10th from 12-3 pm. Santa and toy giveaway.

Elmwood Park Zoo “Chamber Holiday Mixer & Fundraiser” – Thursday, December 8th from 6-9 pm.
Food, drinks, raffles and fun.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jane Pekol, 726 East Marshall Street – Ms. Pekol read a letter that was sent to Council from resident, Jerry Spinelli, talking about places and things from the past in Norristown and how we should be focusing on the “New Norristown” with the primary resource being the people.

Mike Hayes, 330 W. 3rd Street, Bridgeport, Pa – He commented on the Annual Dinner for the PA Society in New York which he said focused on campaign standards. He addressed Council President Lepera saying he has no campaign finance records.

Jim Watters, Stanbridge Street – He handed out an article to Council regarding a Times Herald article from July 11, 2010 regarding the flooding on Sterigere Street. He also mentioned an article in the Inquirer stating that PA is one of the worst with water pollution. He said there is no jurisdiction regarding water pollution.

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Main Street Economic Development Initiative – 14 West Main Street – Simple Divine Restaurant Amendment for \$160,000 Grant Award

Director Musonye noted that the bid was rejected at the last meeting but since then, she found a way by looking at the regulations. She explained that a business in this district can be acquired on behalf of the business and then a judgment be placed on the building to protect the Municipality’s interest in case the business doesn’t succeed. She said that Council awarded \$100,000 for the project a year ago but now the bid is higher due to an increase in labor and materials. Ms. Musonye explained that the funds could be put towards the mortgage so the business can borrow against the property and do the work cheaper.

Ms. Musonye asked for Council to award the increase for the project for a total of \$160,000 so the improvements can be done without additional cost.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the amended Main Street Economic Development Initiative (MEDI) award for 14 West Main Street for \$160,000 to be used for commercial property acquisition. **The motion passed 5-0.**

FIRE

Resolution 23-84: Purchase Washer Extractor/Drying System

Fire Chief O’Donnell noted this purchase will use an Assistance to Firefighters Grant for which was received \$22,272.72 with a 10% match.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the purchase of a gear washer extractor and drying system to launder contaminated structural firefighting garments. **The motion passed 5-0.**

FINANCE

Resolution 23-79: 2024-2028 Capital Improvements Plan

Director Kathy Pfister explained that the details of the projects and the 5-Year Plan are included in the packets provided to Council.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to adopt the 2024-2028 Capital Improvements Plan.

The motion passed 5-0.

Resolution 23-77: 2024 Consolidated Fee Schedule

Director Kathy Pfister noted that this is annually amended for economic reasons. She said that the only change was the Electric Vehicle Charger increased .08 per kilowatt hour.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to adopt the proposed 2024 Consolidated Fee Schedule. **The motion passed 5-0.**

Ordinance No. 23-08: Adopting the FY 2024 Budget and establishing the Real Estate Tax Rate for 2024

Director Pfister stated that the Budget was advertised on November 24, 2023. She noted that the General Budget is \$43,669,539 which includes the Expenditures and Revenues and the Capital Improvements Budget is \$13,064,612.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to adopt the 2024 Budget Ordinance, increasing the millage rate from 17.00 to 17.25. **The motion passed 5-0.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Monthly Updates to Council on the November 2023 activities within the presenting departments: Planning and Recreation

Planning

Director Jayne Musonye presented a Power Point regarding an update on the Economic Development Projects:

The Norristown State Hospital - there are 2 RFPs for the 68 acres Mixed Use and a final decision will be made by the end of the year.

"The Grand at Main & Dekalb" – Land Development Plans have been submitted.

Montgomery Park Senior Housing – Phase III, needs financing. Plans to start in 2025.

Housing Rehabilitation Program

First Time Homebuyers – there's a financial assistance program.

Baer Building Redevelopment – will be coming back regarding seating.

von C Brewing – 1210 Stanbridge Street, Norristown.

257 East Main Street

Elmwood Park Zoo expansion – there's a refund of grant funds.

Royal Farms – the car wash is functioning.

Benjamin Court

1417 & 1419 New Hope Street – currently on hold.

1421 Green Valley Road – changes made.

15 & 17 East Fornance Street – completed. Selling for \$395,000.

1437 Dekalb Street

820 Thomas Street

1722 Sandy Street – called "Sandy Hill"

Stinson Hall – 1651 Markley Street

Curren Terrace – 1011 New Hope Street

Montgomery County Justice Center

Arbor Knoll Townhomes – 1505 Dekalb Street

Arbor Place - Kennedy-Kenrick property. Seeking demolition financing. Should be about 2 ½ months.

Lafayette Street Project – project is funded. First, Ridge Pike Expansion.

Markley Street Project

600 East Fornance Street

Arch Street Greenway – won a grant.

Blight Remediation Project

Trail Junction Center – an RFI went out.

Recreation

Director Cropps-Hawkins noted that the Recreation Department received a Department of Education Grant for renovations. She said the painting project was completed by the deadline and carpets and furniture for the game room are next. She said that, through some partnerships, there will be Youth Indoor Soccer, Martial Arts and Adult Pickleball. She said they are looking to incorporate therapeutic recreation, classes for fashion, arts and branding and classes for seniors. There are also plans to incorporate Norristown native and current Lakers player, Cam Reddish in the Teen area.

Council President Lepera remarked that a Council President candidate must either spend \$250 or raise \$250 in order to show campaign finance records. He said he hasn't raised a dollar. He said his message was for the people of Norristown, not for the people of Bridgeport.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to adjourn the Council Meeting. **The motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo