

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
DECEMBER 19, 2023

The Council Work Session of December 19, 2023 was called to order by Council President Thomas Lepera, at 6:30 PM in the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit 23, 2 W. Lafayette St., 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; Capt. 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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

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

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation by Montgomery County Commission Chair Kenneth Lawrence and Vice Chair Jamila Winder

Kenneth Lawrence, County Commission Chair, said that he is coming to the end of his term and he thanked Council for the opportunity to work with them for the last seven years. He acknowledged the Council members that he worked with, in particular, Council President Lepera and Council Vice President Lewis, who is also coming to the end of her term. He shared that the County wants to have a

relationship with Norristown with the highest priority being the development of a recreational facility. He noted that \$7 million in ARPA funds was provided to the County to conduct a study on a recreational facility. He said that \$5 million in County money has been reserved for Norristown that will be handled as a Grant for that recreational facility which would include a re-imbursement agreement with the Municipal Solicitor.

Mr. Lawrence also provided information about other active and in-progress projects that the County is involved in such as the Lafayette Street Extension, Turnpike Interchange, the Schuylkill River Trail and Streetscape along Lafayette Street, Strawberry Alley, the Chester Valley Trail Extension, Greenway Corridors along Stony Creek and Sawmill Run, Sterigere Street Bridge, County Campus Project, the Trail Junction Center and investment in housing and community development in Norristown, including the homelessness issue.

He introduced County Commissioner Vice Chair, Jamila Winder.

Ms. Winder said she will be officially sworn in as Commissioner Chair on January 3, 2024. She stated she is from East Norriton Township and went to Norristown schools. She said the County will work with Norristown and other partners such as the Elmwood Park Zoo and ACLAMO and other businesses to use ARPA funds for 16 projects such as the enhancement of the Norristown Public Library and support for Senior Centers such as the Montco SAAC and ACLAMO Senior Community Center.

Council President Lepera shared that it has been a pleasure working with both Kenneth Lawrence and Jamila Winder.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trash pickup will be pushed back one day due to the Christmas holiday.

Council President Lepera thanked Vice President Heather Lewis for her eight years of service, including two years as Vice President. He thanked her for her commitment and noted that she accompanied him at practically every meeting and event.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennie Choe, 503 Barbadoes Street – Ms. Choe provided Council with a map she made which highlights areas in Norristown where there are homelessness camps involving drug activity. She said there should be surveillance cameras. She said she mentioned it to the Police Department. She said she also agrees with banning ski masks.

Mike Hayes, 330 West 3rd Street, Bridgeport – Mr. Hayes apologized to Council President Lepera for accusing him of not submitting a pledge for his campaign finances but he found out otherwise. He also thanked the County Commissioners for their good ideas and for their continued efforts in helping the homelessness issue. He quoted a Harvard Study that noted that low income families spend nearly half of their income on shelter.

Rocky Romaniello – He said he is still waiting for his Handicapped Parking space. He said he told the Police Chief and the Code Department about the trouble with the neighbors. He said his street needs

street signs regarding parking and there is a problem with loud motorcycles and robberies. He asked again, "What can I do?"

APPOINTMENTS

Resolution 23-88: a Resolution of the Municipal Council to appoint Dr. Jacqueline Bailey-Davis, Ph.D., as the next Chief of Police of Norristown, effective January 2, 2024.

Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator, provided Dr. Bailey-Davis's credentials. He noted she has more than 3 decades of scholarship in Criminal Justice Education, Public Administration from the University of Cincinnati, Lincoln University and West Chester University and served as a Staff Inspector in the Philadelphia Police Dept., serving in multiple districts. He also noted the schools she attended and training she received.

Mr. Jones explained the process that was carried out to search for a new Police Chief Center by Public Safety Management, a national organization to conduct a national search, which included the recruitment of 12 residents and community leaders to participate in a blind process of which 3 of them conducted interviews. These residents and leaders were trained on how to evaluate assessments of 5 finalists which then became 2 finalists, who were then interviewed by Mr. Jones and ultimately Council. Background checks were conducted and Council was asked to make the appointment of the final candidate.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the appointment of Dr. Jacqueline Bailey-Davis as the next Chief of Police of Norristown, effective January 2, 2024. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Council President Lepera thanked Acting Police Chief for "stepping up to the plate over the past year, keeping the department going and keeping us safe."

Administration of Oath of Office for entry-level Police Officer

Acting Chief Bishop provided information about the selection process and also provided some background information on Officer Ochoa.

Magisterial District Judge Denise Ashe performed the swearing-in ceremony for Officer Cristian Ochoa.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Council motion to approve and direct the selected Development Team to prepare a formal proposal for the 68-acre site at the State Hospital Grounds, including Plans and such other documents for consideration by the Municipality and the RDA in accord with the Urban Redevelopment Law.

Crandall Jones stated that the process started in 2016 with a phone call from Matt Bradford and Governor Wolf conveying the land. A 5-year timetable was set. He provided the information about the process which included a land development study by the State who concluded that the best use of the land would be Senior Housing which was rejected by Council at that time. Once the land was conveyed, an RFP was sent out for a Master Plan Redevelopment of the site.

Mr. Jones noted that the new Director of the Redevelopment Authority is present and the prior Director, Jerry Nugent, who are partners, and Real Estate Strategists/RES Advisors, Kelsey, Evelyn and Becky, who will lead the process.

There was a Power Point presentation conducted by Kelsey E., which reviewed the details of the process including the review of 5 proposals in Executive Session with Council. There were 2 final Mixed-Use proposals with follow-up conversations. Then the final decision was made for a development team.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Council Vice President Lewis**, to select the proposed “Preserve at Stony Creek” with 728 units (280 + apartments and retail and streets and sidewalk come together for a community-gathering place, a Day Care, Pool Clubhouse and a Municipal Yard in accordance with the Urban Redevelopment Law. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Developer, Mr. Tony Maris, President, Pinnacle Realty Development, along with the other team members, said he and his team are very humbled and thanked Council for the opportunity. He provided details of the project and asked for community feedback. He said they have now become a partner with the Municipality.

Resolution 23-87: Request for Council to approve the 2024 Council Meeting Schedule

Crandall Jones confirmed that there will be Council Meetings on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 6:30 pm with the exception of a Wednesday in August for “National Night Out” and a Wednesday in November for Election Day.

There was **a motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the 2024 Council Meeting Schedule. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Request for Municipal Council approval of Assessment Appeal Stipulation agreed upon by the Norristown Area School District and the property owners of 207 Swede Street, Norristown, PA.

Crandall Jones stated that this will result in an additional payment by the property owner.

There was **a motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the Assessment Appeal Stipulation for 207 Swede Street.
The motion passed 6-0.

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Ordinance 23-09: Request authorization to advertise Ordinance 23-09 for the FY2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) proposed budget

Director Musonye said that a recommendation was given for this budget and there were two Public Hearings and now it’s time to advertise. She reviewed the totals for each project with a total of \$919,005.00. She said it will be sent to HUD, if approved, for advertisement.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve the advertisement of the FY2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) proposed budget. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Authorization for the Municipal Administrator to negotiate and execute a Lease Agreement between the Municipality of Norristown and 401 Dekalb Master Tenant Association, LLC, to lease Suite 105 at 401 Dekalb Street for the use of the Norristown Small Business Assistance Center and the Norristown Chamber of Commerce

Director Musonye noted that the Small Business Center was located at 266 East Main Street for 15 years. She said they will share the rent plus utilities with the Chamber of Commerce and the facility will be furnished using ARPA funds.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Council Vice President Lewis**, to approve a Lease Agreement between the Municipality of Norristown and 401 Dekalb Master Tenant Association, LLC. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Zoning Hearing Board application (60-23) 23 East Airy Street

Director Musonye asked Council to send the Solicitor to the next Zoning Hearing Board meeting on December 21, 2023 to represent Council for the 23 East Airy Street application requesting to be a shelter which was already approved by the ZHB and is currently operating.

Council Vice President Lewis remarked that this applicant is well aware of the process and should have taken the proper safety measures.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve sending the Solicitor to the Zoning Hearing Board on December 21st for the 23 East Airy Street application. **The motion passed 6-0.**

POLICE

Resolution 23-86: Motion to approve requests for Disabled Parking Spaces

Acting Chief Bishop explained that these residents have physical limitations and have submitted applications to Officer Crawford. Also, there is no off-street parking available.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Lewis, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve Resolution 23-86 to approve Disabled Parking Spaces for the following addresses:

203 Summit Street
129 Rosemont Avenue
1235 Oakwood Avenue
1821 Locust Street
1103 Swede Street

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve Resolution 23-86. **The motion passed 6-0.**

PUBLIC WORKS

Resolution 23-85: Award of Janitorial Service for Municipal Hall & Norristown Recreation Center

Public Works Director, Thomas Odenigbo, said the contractor is in compliance with the Responsible Contractor Ordinance.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the award of contracted janitorial service for Municipal Hall and the Norristown Recreation Center. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Councilwoman Heather Lewis remarked that it has been an honor for her to serve the Municipality and she hopes that some new thought processes and projects were ushered in. She hopes that the integrity of the town is maintained with the award-winning staff. She hopes that the residents look forward to the future.

ADJOURNMENT

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to adjourn the Council Work Session. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo