

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 16, 2024

The Council Meeting of Tuesday, April 16, 2024 was called to order by Council President, Thomas Lepera, at 6:30 PM in Municipal Hall Chambers, 235 East Airy Street, Norristown, PA.

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

The following Council members were in attendance:

Rebecca Smith
Rashaad Bates
Tiffani Hendley
Lauren Hughes
William McCoy
Dustin Queenan
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Acting Municipal Administrator, Fire Chief Thomas O'Donnell; Patrick Hitchens, Acting Municipal Solicitor; Police Chief Jacqueline Bailey-Davis; Lieutenant Dumas, Norristown Police Department; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Sean Turner, Assistant Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Richard Lockhart, Assistant Fire Chief; Bri'Ana Hawkins, Recreation Director; Amrinder Singh, Code Enforcement Manager; Khal Hassan, Pennoni Engineering.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Vice President Queenan**, to approve the Minutes of the April 2, 2024 Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SAAC (Senior Adult Activities Center), 536 George Street, Norristown. "Balancing Acts: Navigating Caregiving Across Generations." May 18, 2024 from 10 am to 2 pm.

Chamber Recycling, 208 Cherry Street, April 18, 2024 from 5 pm to 7 pm.

Literary Council, 40th Anniversary Celebration on May 23, 2024 from 6 pm to 8:30 pm, 367 E. Lafayette Street.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Janulleh Thomas, 707 E. Marshall Street – He is concerned about the parking situation on the 700 block of West Marshall Street. He received 2 tickets. He said he didn't expect a lack of parking after 6 pm. He said that cars are being towed. He asked about the permits for that area. He asked what plans there are to address this issue. He asked if the lot is for residents at 701-709 West Marshall Street. He asked if there is a process for renewal of permits and is there notification for when they become available?

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street – He provided a copy of the CLA report concerning a task force on flooding. He said that the Norristown Flood Gauge was turned off in 1933. He made a complaint about the flooding issues to State Rep Dean and heard nothing. He said he requested a meeting with current Representative Scanlan. He commented that FEMA should be allowed to build the Norristown Sewer Plant. He said that flooding deprives us of our rights.

Jane Pekol, 726 E. Marshall Street - She noted that the Keep Norristown Beautiful put together an Earth Day event for Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm at Municipal Hall to pull weeds, put down mulch, etc. She said there are also sign-ups for Adopt a Road. There will be kids' games and pizza. She also commented about the PRDC's statement about no subsidies at the last Planning Meeting. She commented that State Rep Scott doesn't want it. She also said there is a lack of participation of Council at public meetings. She said that Norristown needs to recognize the need for affordability.

Akilah Williams , 1210 Stanbridge Street - She said she works for a nonprofit and she helps unhoused people get vital documents and that some of them stay at the Salvation Army and some go back to the tent or in a hotel. She said that subsidized housing is needed.

Cassandra Morabito, 210 E. Fornance Street - Town Watch,

Mary Linda Reitz – 1809 Carson Dr. – She encouraged working with the commissioner and the West Norriton Manager. She said they share Sterigere Street. She said the traffic pattern with 700 plus extra people will extend from Stanbridge Street to Germantown Pike.

Theresa from Norristown Local – There will be a 1st Friday Initiative, located between Main & Cherry Streets.

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Public Hearing: Council to consider and, if appropriate, decide on the Norristown State Hospital Redevelopment Proposal submitted by the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County ("RDA") with Pinnacle Realty Development Company ("PRDC") on the condition that the RDA and PRDC execute a redevelopment contract to the satisfaction of the Municipality and in accordance with the Urban Redevelopment Law.

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

Solicitor Hitchens explained that early Redevelopment Law requires Public Hearings. He explained that the property is a Mixed-Use Zoning Use on 68.333 acres surrounded by Sterigere Street, Stanbridge Street, West Sterigere Street and the grounds of the Norristown Farm Park. He submitted the following exhibits: Exhibit M-1 – copy of the Notice for the Public Hearing; M-2 – Affidavit of Public Hearing; M-3 – Proposed Conceptual Plan and accompanying documents; M-4 – Public Hearing summaries from April 14 and April 20 of 2024.

Director Musonye was asked by Solicitor Hitchens if a Special Planning Meeting was held on April 11, 2024 to which she responded “yes.”

Solicitor Hitchens noted that exhibit M-5 was a copy of the summary with recommendations from this meeting.

Mr. Anthony Maras of Pinnacle Realty Development Company presented a Power Point about the Norristown State Hospital project proposal. He provided a background, noting that an RFP for a conceptual plan was submitted to Council and the feedback plan was amended. He said they satisfied the Urban Redevelopment Law and Council and they were subsequently selected as the Developer.

Mr. Maras displayed the site plan on the screen noting the 4 types on the frame plan which includes For Sale and Garden and Podium apartments, a grocery store, quick-service restaurant, and an office/industrial building. He explained that 2 Public Meetings have been held so far and they are also working with the Chamber of Commerce. He said they are not seeking TIFs or a LERTA from the Norristown Area School District, Norristown or the County. He said they are able to create affordability without subsidies by designating a number of units as “rent to own.” He said there are more meetings to come and a Master Plan process and a Conditional Use process. He said they still need to address issues with stormwater and traffic. He noted that the Traffic Engineer’s studies will be reviewed by professionals. He added that their involvement with the Liberty Bell Trail along Stanbridge Street must satisfy the Municipal Engineer.

Mr. Maras noted that the site will be inclusive and inviting with access points. He shared that the net fiscal amount to the County from the development will be about \$4.6 million after counting for trash collection, Police, etc. He added that the net fiscal amount to Norristown is about \$1.57 million per year. He said that the 20 years’ cumulative amount to Norristown, the County and the Norristown School District totals about \$90 million.

Mr. Maras shared a newly-created website to access development updates of the project. It is www.PreserveatStonyCreek.com.

Solicitor Hitchens explained what Council is considering for approval.

Public Comment

Le’Roy James Watters, Hamilton Street – He shared that a 1992 Master Plan considered 17.8 acres of ponds and lakes on this site for flood control for the Zoo. He said he is concerned that about this site since it is back to back with the Recreation Center.

Jane Pekol, 726 E. Marshall Street - She addressed Mr. Maras saying that the focus in Norristown should be on vacant lots and buildings in town. She said she is worried about creating a different Main Street.

Cassandra Morabito, 210 E. Fornance Street - She said she agrees that old buildings should be preserved. She said this site plan has too many rentals and there is a need to own and invest in the community. She said she would rather see businesses or a trade school there to create jobs. She said she disagrees with the estimate of 112 kids with 728 units. She said that currently it shows that Sterigere & Whitehall can't take the extra traffic. She suggested working with West Norriton regarding stormwater, water and electricity.

Laura Smith, 1802 Powell Street – She feels that Council already made a decision regarding this plan. She asked where the water is going to go? She said she was not notified of this project and said it affects everybody. She said everyone should know about the traffic.

Mr. Maras noted that it is required that adjoining properties are notified and it was also advertised. He said it is impossible to send a mailing to all property owners. He also said that the new website is available for information.

Brad McLaughlin, - He said he is excited to see this development because it will give back millions to Norristown.

Linda Mulligan, Joseph Street – She feels that traffic will be the biggest problem. She said she thinks the net amount of children is more than 100. She doesn't think it will bring many people due to the need for affordability. She also asked where the water is going. She addressed Mr. Maras saying that what the community wants was not in the RFP (Request for Proposal.)

Mr. Maras responded saying that Council told them what to put and not to put at that site. He added that the Plan is not finalized and that the number of school age children was picked by the Planner.

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

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Queenan, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the Norristown State Hospital Redevelopment Proposal submitted by the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County (RDA) with Pinnacle Realty Development Company (PRDC) on the condition that the RDA and PRDC execute a redevelopment contract to the satisfaction of the Municipality and in accordance with the Urban Redevelopment Law. **The motion passed unanimously.**

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Resolution 24-46: Request Council to affirm that no Public Officials and Employees of the Municipality can act or speak for the Municipality without approval of the Municipality, including Social Media platforms.

Solicitor Hitchens explained that information was derived from the office of Kilkenny Law regarding a U.S. Supreme Court case that involved an official who used social media to speak on behalf of a Municipality. He said it was recommended to all of our Municipalities to adopt this.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 24-46 to protect the Municipality from any future claims of speech oppression or viewpoint discrimination of those associated with the Municipality. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PARKS AND RECREATION

Resolution 24-42: to request the use of ARPA Funds in the amount of \$491,825.00 for a new roof at the Norristown Recreation Center

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Resolution 24-42 in order to prioritize the safety of everyone and maintain the operational efficiency of the current building which includes regular inspections, maintenance and adherence to safety protocols. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request for Council to reallocate funds awarded to the Department of Recreation for a new facility. The funds can be used to install a new playground and fitness area at Elmwood Park.

Acting Municipal Administrator, Tom O'Donnell, said that there will be a proposed playground presentation at the next Council meeting. Council President Lepera said that the funds need to be allocated by the end of the year.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the funds in order to ensure that Elmwood Park provides a safe and enjoyable recreational space for all, considering that the equipment does not meet the ASTM standards. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-40: awarding a contract to Landmarks SGA, LLC in the amount of \$54,000 for the Historical Façade Improvement Program

Sean Turner, Assistant Planning Director, noted that they have worked with this applicant before and they have an understanding of the service. Director Musonye explained this is for commercial residential use with 4 resident buildings or more.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Resolution 24-40 awarding a contract in compliance with Section 7-713 of the Home Rule Charter and Section 7-713 of the Home Rule Charter and Section 40-35(A)(6) of the Administrative Code which states, "All contracts in excess of \$23,200 shall be in writing and shall be awarded by Municipal Council, and the contract shall be executed by the Municipal Administrator." **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-47: authorizing execution of an amendment to the agreement among MM Partners, the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority and the Municipality pertaining to the redevelopment of East Main and Dekalb Streets.

Sean Turner explained that in September 2021, a redevelopment proposal was approved and in March of 2022, Resolution 22-16 authorized an Agreement of Sale. He added that in 2023, a Conditional Use was approved. He said that an RFP for a new consultant is recommended. He noted that 2 representatives pertaining to the redevelopment are present.

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 24-47 to authorize MM Partners and the RDA to amend the redevelopment and sale agreement to grant an extension of time to obtain land development approvals and to waive a deposit requirement. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-48: request for Preliminary/Final Land Development approved for 1020 Violet Street by ABP Investments, Inc.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes** to table this item. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Presentation of Norristown Redevelopment Area Transportation Study by Pennoni

There was a Power Point presentation by the Municipal Planner. He outlined the areas that were studied. He said he is requesting feedback in order to move forward with implementation to improve quality of life. Some of the highlights of the presentation were “What are the Study’s Recommendations?” – “Major Intersection Improvements” – “Crossing Improvements” – “Sidewalk Improvements.” He noted that West Main Street was a major concern.

POLICE

Resolution 24-43: Request for the approval of Handicapped Parking at 722 Kohn Street

Lieutenant Dumas noted that this meets the requirements for a Handicapped Parking space.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve Resolution 24-43 for a Handicapped Parking space at 722 Kohn Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-44: Motion to approve the purchase of six (6) Cosmo Pay Stations with Mag Swipe/Insert CC Terminal (EMV) from Integrated Technical Systems, Inc.

Lieutenant Dumas stated there will be 382 single-space meters.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 24-44 to improve the efficiency, lower the costs and increase revenue in the Courthouse parking area. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-45: Request for Council to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with the County of Montgomery to locate a relay system for Police and Emergency Services on One Montgomery Plaza

Lieutenant Dumas explained that this would complement the video rent space with the County.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Council Vice President Queenan**, to approve Resolution 24-45 to allow the Municipality to locate, maintain and operate antenna, relays and related equipment (Relay System) for Police and Emergency Services on One Montgomery Plaza. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC WORKS

Resolution 24-41: Resolution for Municipal Council to approve the purchase of two (2) 60-inch, 40 horsepower, Zero Turn Mowers from Outdoor Power Equipment – Norristown, at the Co-Star price of \$17,063.75 each.

Public Works Director, Thomas Odenigbo, explained that the old mowers are not cost-effective to maintain.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve Resolution 24-41. **The motion passed unanimously.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

There were no March 2024 Departmental Reports.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo