

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 7, 2024

The Council Meeting of Tuesday, May 7, 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
Lauren Hughes
William McCoy
Dustin Queenan
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Acting Municipal Administrator, Fire Chief Thomas O'Donnell; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Police Chief Jacqueline Bailey-Davis; Lieutenant Dumas, Norristown Police Department; Jayne Musonye, 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Vice President Queenan**, to approve the Minutes of the April 16, 2024 Council Meeting. **The motion passed 6-0.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

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

PRESENTATIONS

Elmwood Park Playground Renovation Presentation

Bri'Ana Hawkins, Recreation Director, presented a Power Point regarding the Elmwood Park Renovation. She explained that the playground equipment needs to be replaced. She provided a report that included statistics on playground injuries due to faulty slides, swings and the surface of the playground. She also noted that there have been deaths due to entanglement or poor or lack of maintenance.

Ms. Hawkins stated she provided to Council a letter explaining the condition of Elmwood Park which is over 40 years old and does not align with the ASTM standards.

The Power Point highlighted "Safety Concerns," "Legal Liability" and "Community Well-Being."

She asked Council to consider reallocating funds to prioritize the purchase of new playground equipment.

She presented renderings on the Power Point of a 3-D mode of the playground design established by Lyons Recreation. It was ADA compliant with sensory items and climbing areas. The total cost is \$405,011.00 and a separate cost of \$26,503 for site amenities such as benches.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council Vice President Queenan said that a Spanish translation of the Council meeting is available through headsets provided by Jessie in the rear of the Chambers.

Norristown Garden Contest – sponsored by the Norristown Garden Club. Open to residents. Entries must be received by June 10th. Judging is on June 26th. Entry is free. Contest Entry Forms are in the rear of the Chambers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jane Pekol, 726 East Marshall Street – She said that there should be an Animal Control Officer. She asked for follow-up about this. She asked if funds could be allocated. She suggested a comprehensive approach such as a Spay/Neuter program. She said she is interested in the history with the Municipality regarding animal control. She also said there should be tax breaks for the businesses on Markley Street due to the construction. She asked about opening up Code Red Shelters in the daytime, especially for the elderly.

Valerie Eiding, 1804 Locust Street – regarding her stormwater billing tier level, she said she appealed her bill because she doesn't have a patio and is the same tier as neighbors with patios. She was told to get a re-measurement, pay \$25 for another appeal or attend a meeting. She was told to meet with Thomas Odenigbo after the Council meeting.

APPOINTMENTS

Oath of Office – Council Member Lauren Hughes, Fourth District

District Judge, Hakim Jones, conducted the swearing-in for Lauren Hughes, Councilwoman for the Fourth District.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Resolution 24-55: Request for Council to authorize the use of ARPA Funds in the amount of \$405,011.00 for Elmwood Park Playground Renovations

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve Resolution 24-55. **The motion passed 6-0.**

BUILDINGS & CODE COMPLIANCE

Historical Architectural Review Board – April 2024

Amrinder Singh, Buildings & Code Manager, noted that a HARB application was received, reviewed and recommended for approval for the following address:
540 Kohn Street

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the above address. **The motion passed 6-0.**

UCC Accessibility Advisory Board Variance Request for Elmwood Park Zoo

Mr. Singh noted that, following a Hearing, the Variance Request for accessibility issues and continuing work was granted by the State for the Elmwood Park Zoo.

Proclamation recognizing May 2024 as Building Safety Month

Mr. Singh read the Proclamation providing details as to the importance of building safety. It provides education for the public about solutions to improve safety, sustainability and safety codes to reduce blight and property damage. He said this is the 6th Annual celebration of Building Safety Month.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to issue a proclamation recognizing the importance of building safety by declaring May 2024 as Building Safety Month in the Municipality of Norristown. **The motion passed 6-0.**

FIRE

Resolution 24-53: requesting Municipal Council approval for the purchase of a Taylor'd Size 12 Firefighting Prop from Taylor'd System LLC for a cost of \$59,000.

Assistant Fire Chief Lockhart explained there will be hands-on training and the Prop is covered using grants and donations.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Queenan, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to purchase a hands-on firefighting prop to be used in the training of firefighters in the area of forcible entry, ventilation, bailout and other required training. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 24-54: a request for Municipal Council to approve authorizing the sale of surplus communications and firefighting equipment.

Assistant Fire Chief Lockhart noted these items need to be discarded.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve selling surplus communications and fire equipment by electronic bidding as outlined in Municipal Code 4-36. **The motion passed 6-0.**

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Resolution 24-52: Request for Council to approve payment of \$100,000 to Gordon H. Bayer Construction for closeout labor costs related to the Municipal Hall Renovation Project.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve a \$100,000 payment to Gordon H. Bayer Construction for additional labor costs and general conditions incurred to complete the Municipal Hall project. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Request for Council approval of a one-year health insurance plan renewal with Delaware Valley Health Trust

Fire Chief O'Donnell explained this is to renew benefits for an additional year.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve a one-year health insurance plan renewal with Delaware Valley Health Trust. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Request for Council to deny all proposals received for the Towing Request for Proposals (RFP) and authorize the re-advertising of the Towing Request for Proposals.

Solicitor Kilkenny noted that after review of the Towing Request for Proposals, they were found to be non-compliant.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to deny all proposals received for the Towing Request for Proposals and authorize the re-advertising of the Towing Request for Proposals. **The motion passed 6-0.**

POLICE

Resolution 24-39: Motion to approve the grant application for Recruitment Incentives for Law Enforcement.

Police Chief Bailey-Davis explained that due to personnel shortages, processes need to be streamlined and a need to recruit diversified applicant pools. Lieutenant Dumas noted the amount of the grant is \$20,000.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to obtain grant funding for recruitment activities. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 24-50: Motion to approve Handicapped Parking Signage at 502 E. Elm Street

Lieutenant Dumas explained that the application was reviewed and approved.

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve the Handicapped Parking Sign at 502 E. Elm Street. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 24-51: Motion to approve a \$10,000.00 gift from Hounds Heroes for the purchase of a Police K-9.

Police Chief Bailey-Davis stated that the Police Department currently has one canine that assists with the detection of guns and drugs and assists with searches and patrols.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to obtain the \$10,000.00 gift from Hounds Heroes for the purchase of a Police K-9. **The motion passed 6-0.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Planning

Planning Director, Jayne Musonye, provided the status of current projects:

Norristown State Hospital:	making great progress
The Grand at Main & Dekalb:	having discussions, will be submitting Land Development
Housing Rehabilitation Program	two completed, third on the way
14 West Main Street	hoping to complete in the summer
Elmwood Park Zoo	moving along, escrow released
Benjamin Court	all 30 units sold
Stinson Hall	condos for sale
Curren Terrace	waiting for lower interest rates
Montgomery County Justice Center	inspections completed
Arbor Place	moving along
600 East Fornance Street	changing personnel
Arch Street Greenway	received a \$1.5 million Transportation and Blight

Trail Junction Center

Remediation funding to turn properties into a Stormwater Facility
hoping for construction in 2025

Ms. Musonye said that details about other projects will be shared when the information is received.

Recreation

Bri'Ana Hawkins, Recreation Director, provided a brief update: There are 64 sign-ups for Summer Camp; Spring League Basketball has 86 participants, ages 8-14; Bidy Ball Clinic on Mondays; Basketball Clinics for ages 14-16 - Mondays, games on Tuesday and Wednesday held at Eisenhower; Girls Basketball kicked off at the Recreation Center on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:30; round 2 Spring Session Pickleball; option for Summer Yoga for Seniors on Tuesdays and Thursdays and swimming instructions at the Carver Center and also acting workshops in the summer.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo