

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 4, 2024

The Council Meeting of Tuesday, June 4, 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; Jacqueline Bailey-Davis, Chief of Police; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Sean Turner, Assistant Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Amanda Ciarlante, Assistant 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 Hendley, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the Minutes of the May 21, 2024 Council Work Session. **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 issues.

PRESENTATIONS

Literacy Council of Norristown celebrating forty years of literacy in Norristown

Councilman Bates read the Proclamation for the Literacy Council of Norristown. He read that they began in 1984 to improve Math, Reading and Writing skills for students. He noted they expanded their services in 2022 and launched an initiative that provided free books. He noted they received the Keystone State Literacy Association Award in 2023. On May 23, 2024, they celebrated their 40th anniversary.

Speed Calming Improvements at Dekalb & Brown, Dekalb & Summit and Dekalb & Freedley Streets

Brian Keaveney, Pennoni Engineer, explained that in 2023, PennDOT implemented low-cost safety improvements on the speed table on Dekalb Street. He noted that the Municipality applied for a traffic signal but he explained that PennDOT stated that the traffic volume is too low to allow a traffic light on that stretch of Dekalb Street at Freedley, Summit and Brown Streets. Mr. Keaveney said they are proposing measures to improve the road with speed bumps and illuminated stop signs. He said the Municipality would enter into a maintenance agreement with PennDOT, who would do the initial installation. He provided a Power Point showing the proposed bumps and signage. He noted there would be a chance for the Municipality to review the maintenance agreement.

PUBLIC WORKS

Resolution 24-65: Motion for Municipal Council to approve proposed Speed Calming Improvements at Dekalb & Brown, Dekalb & Summit and Dekalb & Freedley Streets and sign a Maintenance Agreement with PennDOT

Dawn Gallo, 1608 Dekalb Street – Ms. Gallo said she can't believe the discussion is about how much things cost. She said you can't take a life back. She doesn't want a traffic light at Brown & Dekalb. She said the cars speed every day and there needs to be Police presence. She shared that when Fox 29 News was there, a car was speeding by. She said there were 3 accidents on May 11. She hopes something can be done.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the proposed Speed Calming Improvements at Dekalb & Brown, Dekalb & Summit and Dekalb & Freedley Streets and to sign a Maintenance Agreement with PennDOT. **The motion passed unanimously.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council Vice President Queenan announced that Jessie is available in the rear of the Chambers to provide headphones for translation to Spanish.

Councilman McCoy announced that there will be a raising of the LGBTQ+ "Pride" flag in front of the Municipal Building after the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carey Baumann, 1029 W. Lafayette Street – She said that the Norristown Police Department almost debilitated her family. She was told by Officer Buttonwood to come with \$600 in order to have a boot removed from her car. She said that she was ticketed for parking on the street on cleaning day. She has safety concerns with parking away from the house at 2 am after work. She said her family has no vehicle now and can't go to work. The ticket increased to about \$600 due to late charges with the original amount being \$178.00. She asked to be put on a payment arrangement to get the "boot" removed. She wants to see what kind of help to get. She said there are no parking passes in her neighborhood. She said it's not fair.

Dominick Jackson, 1029 W. Lafayette Street – with Carey Baumann. He said he has complained about the trash on the streets. He said he tries to clean up to help make it easier for the street cleaner. He said they can't pay the \$600 at once. He said he is asking for understanding.

Jordan Thomas, 600 block Kohn Street – he said he agrees with the other comments. He said he found out from Danielle at the Municipality that the street cleaner is out of commission and he said they are still giving parking tickets. He wants to know what is done with the money. He said that cars park where they want and a Handicapped space on the street is not being used. He said there are trash cans with wheels broke off and trash is everywhere. He asked, "Where is Code?" He said he told the trash people about a sofa. He said the trash collection is not equitable in Norristown with Kohn Street and Marshall Street having overflowing trash cans.

Rocco – He said he always gets rejected for a Handicapped Parking sign. He said neighbors switch plates and park where they shouldn't. He said there is a pile of trash behind his car. He knows of a house on Beech & Kohn Streets that have 9 cars. He said he pays taxes and gets nothing. He said that trash is always piled up.

Richard, Lansdale – He congratulated Norristown for starting the Pride Flag raising in 2018. He said there is historical significance.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Resolution 24-63: Recognizing June 2024 as LGBTQ+ Pride Month

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve Resolution 24-63. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-66: Request for Municipal Council to approve a Contract Renewal Agreement with Contractual Special Events Coordinator Tracie Henry

Thomas O'Donnell noted the contract is until the end of 2024.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the Contract Renewal Agreement with Contractual Special Events Coordinator Tracie Henry. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-62: Request for Municipal Council to approve and accept the agreement with the Montgomery County Housing Authority for the Municipality to conduct Criminal Background Checks on behalf of the Montgomery County Housing Authority

Thomas O'Donnell noted this would be a service the Municipality can offer to speed up the process for getting their Background Grounds in order to receive Section 8.

Councilwoman Hughes questioned the Police doing the Background Checks and asked why can't the Housing Authority do their own Background Checks?

Thomas O'Donnell noted this is formalizing the process that has already been in place for several Municipal Administrations.

Councilwoman Hughes posed a scenario of the Police uncovering a criminal history and having to go to the residence. She said it may appear as an impropriety, so she questioned why the Police have to conduct the Background Checks.

Thomas said the Police would need a special number issued by the State Police giving them the authority to do it on behalf of the County.

Thomas O'Donnell said the County doesn't have the ability to conduct the Background Checks on their terminal. He believes the information provided to the Police is only from the Housing Authority and does not include criminal information.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve and accept the agreement with the Montgomery County Housing Authority for the Municipality to conduct Criminal Background Checks on behalf of the Montgomery County Housing Authority. **The motion passed 6-1, with Councilwoman Hughes as a "nay."**

Motion for Municipal Council to rescind the Priority Waiver granted to Spohn Ranch and its subcontractors from Section 133-3(11) of the Norristown Code Ordinances 50% Craft Laborers for the Poley Skatepark Project

Solicitor Kilkenny explained that at the last meeting, a Waiver was approved but for apprenticeship requirements in all trades. He said the Motion was passed but one of the trades could not get to the 70% apprenticeship requirement. He said the way it was written applied to all trades, not that particular one so he wanted to clarify. He said his Office spoke to Council President clarifying it.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the rescinding of the Priority Waiver granted to Spohn Ranch and its subcontractors. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PARKS AND RECREATION

Resolution 24-60: a Resolution in the amount of \$27,000 to authorize payment to Rotation Records Productions for the Summer Concert Series hosted by the Norristown Department of Recreation

Recreation Director, Bri'Ana Hawkins, noted the schedule runs from June 16 until September 1, 2024.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to authorize payment to Rotation Records for the Summer Concert Series. **The motion passed unanimously.**

POLICE

Resolution 24-61: Motion to establish Handicapped Parking at multiple locations

The Police Chief noted the requests for Handicapped Parking were for the following addresses:

1122 Arch Street
142 Rosemont Avenue
1419 Juniper Street
23 West Chestnut Street
1204 Pine Street

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the Handicapped Parking spaces. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-64: Motion to approve the Civil Service Resolution for entry-level Police candidates and Certified Eligibility List

Chief Bailey noted that the Norristown Civil Service Commission approved Industrial Organization Solutions as a test provider for the Norristown Police Department in order to have a stand-alone test. She noted that the written exam was conducted on February 10, 2024. Police Chief explained that after administering the written exam, there was a Physical Agility Test and Background Checks were performed. The five remaining candidates were sent to the Civil Service Commission. She said that it came down to 4 men and 1 woman on May 16, 2024 with the 4 men having Veterans Preference. She asked Council to approve the testing company process as well as certifying the list.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the Civil Service Resolution for entry-level Police Officer candidates and certification. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request authorization to advertise Ordinance 24-03 to amend Chapter 293 Towing and Towers, Section 5, Qualifications Contractor of the Norristown Municipal Code; providing Severability Clause and providing an effective date

Chief read “Those involved in doing contractual work for the Municipality shall not have been convicted of fraud, theft, receiving stolen property and other dishonest business practices or have been convicted of a misdemeanor of the first degree or greater prior to or during the term of performing work on behalf of the Municipality.”

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to authorize the advertisement of Ordinance 24-03 to amend Chapter 293 Towing and Towers, Section 5, Qualifications Contractor of the Norristown Municipal Code providing Severability Clause and providing an effective date. **The motion passed unanimously.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Monthly Update to Council: Presenting Departments – Public Works & Code

Public Works

Thomas Odenigbo, Public Works Director, presented a Power Point which highlighted the “Summary of responsibilities.” He noted that the department has 21 full-time and part-time employees. He also noted that the Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of public properties and rights-of-way. The Power Point also highlighted the “Norristown Public Matrix for Daily Operations” which included 250 potholes and alleys patched monthly, crack sealing, striping from June to September, street sweeping, sidewalk sweeping, keeping inlets free of debris, litter collections from the Business District, main arteries and parks. Other highlights were: J.P. Mascaro is the Waste Hauler, Big Belly Trash Cans are at 72 locations, City Sweeps in May and November, Enhance Cleaning, Right-of-Way Inspection, Street Restoration Meeting with the PA American Water and PECO, streets milled and overlayed from curb to curb 2024.

Code

Amrinder Singh, Code Manager, provided updates from May 2024. He said they were able to secure a Demolition Order with the Court of Common Pleas with the assistance of the Municipal Solicitor’s Office for the demolition of 23 East Fornance Street. He said they are working with the Municipal Engineer to get the bid specs put together so the property can be demolished quickly. He noted that three families have been displaced because of the property. He added that last year, a million dollar demolition project using General Funds and a \$300,000 Grant with Planning and Zoning was put together. He said the bid specs are being put together for the 25 identified properties and once the bids are received, they will know how many properties will be demolished.

Mr. Singh also stated that Applications and Forms have been updated which hasn’t happened since 2019 and, also, the Department Website and Department Page will be updated as well. He said it will help Stakeholders find information more efficiently.

He also noted that there will be an Online Customer Service Portal Phase 1 so customers can do business 24/7 such as paying for Permits, Ticket Violations and renewing Contracts or Licenses.

He said that Phase 2 will be for Permit Applications, submitting Rental Licensing online and other business normally done at the counter or through the mail.

Council President Lepera asked about bundling demolition bids. Mr. Singh said they will try to bundle together 2-4 bids to entice bidding and to save costs for the demolition companies.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Council Vice President Queenan**, to adjourn the Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo