

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
JULY 16, 2024

The Council Work Session of Tuesday, July 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:

Interim Municipal Administrator, Fire Chief Thomas O'Donnell; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Jacqueline Bailey-Davis, Norristown Police Chief; Lt. Michael Bishop, NPD; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Richard Lockhart, Assistant Fire Chief; Amanda Ciarlante, Assistant Finance Director; 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 Council Vice President, Dustin Queenan, to approve the Minutes of the June 18, 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 litigation issues.

PRESENTATION

Sewer Authority Updates to Municipal Council

Barry Thompson, Executive Director, Norristown Municipal Waste Authority, came before Council to address Permit Fees and to provide Sewer Authority Updates. He introduced Kelly Vazquez, Executive Administrator and Shane VanBuskirk, Operations Manager. He invited anyone who is interested to take a tour of the Sewer Facility.

One of the highlights that Mr. Thompson provided is a \$14 million upgrade to the plant by replacing equipment. Also, the plant is involved in a flood-proofing program with 2 new projects over the next 1 ½ years in order to recover faster from a flood.

He added that televising of the Kennedy-Kenrick project took place and the State Hospital project. He said that minor problems with both projects were corrected and he confirmed that the Sewer Plant will be able to withstand

Development capacity by next Spring. He said that the Plant received grants from Representative Scott's office. He plans on returning in October to provide updates to Council.

With regard to Permit Fees, he said the Plant was charged \$97,000 by the Municipality for the completed renovation of the Administration Building. He said going forward, he would like to come to some agreement about how to handle the Permit Fees because he said it is really the residents who pay them.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

"Kids Fair" at the Elmwood Park Zoo on August 8, 2024 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

Come to the Pool, Saturday, July 20th at the Carver Center at 1:00.

Zumba class on July 20, 2024 from 10 am to 11 am at the Carver Center.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street – Mr. Watters read a letter he wrote to David Coran regarding Handicapped Parking Spaces, the Schuylkill being the 3rd Worst Polluted, FEMA flood records, dams removed from the Perkiomen. Jurisdiction issues with American Water, USGS is behind the flood gates which were turned off in 1933 and turned back on in 2001.

Cynthia Culbreath, Bristol Avenue – Ms. Culbreath read a letter in support of a Norristown native – Josh Culbreath. She said it's been 3 years since his passing. She presented a proposal to honor his memory – naming Coolidge and East Brown Street after him which is in front of Eisenhower School where she said he fell in love with Track & Field. She noted that "Greatness can emerge from our small town."

Yvonne Platts, Arch Street – She said having the sign for Josh needs to happen. She asked, "Why not have an Olympian honored?"

Mike Hayes, 3rd Street, Bridgeport – He expressed concern that Tax Abatement for the Phase III Senior Housing was declined. He welcomes the new Administrator.

Jane Pekol, resident – She said she likes the new Elmwood Park playground. She asked Thomas O'Donnell to meet with the new Administrator and the Police Chief regarding the homeless and regarding a case in Grants Pass, Oregon, considering the treatment of the homeless cruel and unusual punishment.

Al Zone, Elmwood Park Zoo Director – He thanked Council for attending the opening of the first phase of the Zoo Project. He provided copies of the Zoo's 100th Anniversary book. He complemented the new playground and the 4th of July celebration. He added that there will be artifacts about Josh Culbreath on display at the Visitor Center at the Elmwood Park Zoo.

Denise Agurto, UNIDES – She thanked Council for the success of their event and for the 4th of July celebration. She said they formed a 25-member committee to represent the businesses. She thanked Council for showing their work. She said she sees inclusion.

Mayeli Chanez – She said she runs an ice cream shop on Marshall Street. She thanked Council for including them in their most recent events and she thanked them for accepting applications.

Rocio Encarnacion - She invited everyone to an upcoming event for Mexican culture.

David Spitofsky, Attorney – He has had an office on Swede Street for 23 years. He said the back of his building faces Church Street where there is a soup kitchen. He said the situation has become more difficult with people sleeping on the sidewalk. There is food on the sidewalks. They block the area near the Courthouse and are aggressive. He said they cannot co-exist with people who work there. He said he would like to discuss this.

Sean – He said he owns property on the 500 block of Swede Street and he has the same issue and he said this is a widespread issue. He also said it is hard to keep the area clean. He said the Police tell them to leave but there is no relief. He is asking for help.

APPOINTMENTS

Resolution 24-71: Request approval to hire four (4) Probationary Police Officers

Police Chief Bailey-Davis requested recommendation of Conditional Letters of Appointment.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilman Bates, to approve the hiring of four (4) Probationary Police Officers. The motion passed unanimously.

Request Motion to Swear-In Justin Rathke

Justin Rathke was joined by some of his family members and was sworn in by Judge Hakim Jones.

Police Chief Bailey-Davis shared some of Justin's accomplishments including ten years in the Air Force Reserves.

Resolution 24-74: Request Council to appoint Leonard Lightner as Municipal Administrator

There was a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Council Vice President Queenan, to appoint Leonard Lightner as Municipal Administrator. The motion passed unanimously.

BUILDING & CODES COMPLIANCE

Council President Lepera thanked Amrinder Singh for his service and wished him well moving forward. Mr. Singh's last day is Friday, July 19, 2024.

Presentation to Municipal Council: Norristown Online Business Portal

Mr. Singh presented a Power Point regarding the "Norristown Public Portal." The presentation included Permit payments, Violation ticket payments, Lead certifications, Contract renewals and payments.

Request for Municipal Council to approve Professional Services Agreement with Pennoni

Mr. Singh noted that regarding property demolition, the owners were notified but failed to repair.

There was a motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Smith, to approve a Professional Service Agreement with Pennoni Engineering in the amount of \$43,000. The motion passed unanimously.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Resolution 24-75: request for Municipal Council to authorize the transfer and donation of baseball fencing to Pottstown Borough for use at the Pottstown Memorial Park

Council President Lepera explained that the West Norriton and East Norriton Little Leagues merged and Pottstown needed fencing.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman Bates, to approve the transfer and donation of baseball fencing to Pottstown Borough for use at the Pottstown Memorial Park. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 24-77: request for Municipal Council to authorize the purchase of a Tiger RBF-130 Rear Boom Flail Mowing Attachment in the amount of \$33,595.68 for a Public Works Tractor

Thomas Odenigbo said he does not recommend the approval of this because he does not know about it.

Council Vice President Queenan said to go with the Director.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley, to approve the purchase of the Mowing Attachment for a Public Works Tractor. A Roll Call Vote resulted in:

Rebecca Smith	yes
Rashaad Bates	yes
Tiffany Hendley	yes
William McCoy	no
Lauren Hughes	yes
Dustin Queenan	no
Thomas Lepera	yes

Motion passed 5-2.

Motion for Council to authorize the Proposed Amended Trust Order/Wave 2 Opioid Settlements

Solicitor Kilkenny said that tens of thousands in settlement was received and approval is needed to receive additional funds from these settlements.

There was a motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman McCoy, to approve the Proposed Amended Trust Order/Wave 2 Opioid Settlements. The motion passed unanimously.

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 24-72: award of a 3-year contract in the amount of \$109,000 to Community Grants, Planning & Housing (CGP&H) for HOME existing owner-occupied rehabilitation professional services

Director Musonye noted that an RFP went out for professional services and 2 proposals were received.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Council Vice President Queenan, to award a contract in compliance with Section 7-713 of the House Rule Charter and Section 4-35(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 document shall be executed by the Municipal Administrator." The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-78: granting Preliminary Plan approval to MMPartners, LLC, and DAJ Main & Dekalb, LLC, for the development of a 7-story Mixed-Use building at 69 East Main Street

Director Musonye noted that the Norristown Planning Commission had no objection to the application and recommended approval. She said they will be back for a Final approval.

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to grant Preliminary Plan approval for the 7-story Mixed-Use building at 69 East Main Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-79: authorizing execution of a second 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

Council President Lepera said that due to a lack of information, this item will be tabled.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to table Resolution 24-79 due to lack of information. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-80: to approve the LERTA application for Elon at Montgomery Park Phase III (1301 Powell Street)

Director Musonye noted this is Phase III which was recommended by the School Board. President Lepera said the School Board didn't approve the LERTA. He added that there is such a need for senior housing and we need to affirm our position on the LERTA.

There was a **motion by Council President Lepera, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 24-80. **A Roll Call Vote resulted in:**

Rebecca Smith	yes
Rashaad Bates	yes
Tiffani Hendley	no
William McCoy	yes
Lauren Hughes	yes
Dustin Queenan	no
Thomas Lepera	yes

The motion passed 5-2.

Resolution 24-81: a Resolution of the Municipality of Norristown, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, amending Phase II Final Plan Approval granted to PROSOV, LLC, for the development of a multifamily residential complex that includes 325 units at 1920 Dekalb Pike, 1910 Arch Street and 250 E. Johnson Highway

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve Resolution 24-81 approving an amendment to Phase II of the Final Land Development approval granted for the Kennedy-Kenrick Redevelopment Project. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 24-82: a Resolution to support the project of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to convert Dekalb Street (Route 202) into a two-way road

A representative from DAWOOD (Engineers and Planners) presented a Power Point, "Dekalb Street Two-Way Conversion." They said the Preliminary Engineering Design will be in 2026, Final Design 2027-2028 and construction 2029.

Elizabeth said the focus is on safety and transit. Other items covered were "Collision Data Overview" and "Proposed Possible Improvements."

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Resolution 24-82. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Zoning Hearing Board Application (31-24) 933 West Main Street

Director Musonye explained that the application is for a Mixed-Use MSMU District Mental Health & Wellness Facility.

Ms. Musonye noted that the patients would have to come to the office. She said that affects the neighborhood.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to send the Solicitor to reject the ZHB application. **The motion passed unanimously.**

FIRE

Resolution 24-76: request for Municipal Council to authorize the use of ARPA Funds in the amount of \$204,431.83 to purchase (2) new Fire Department vehicles

Assistant Fire Chief Lockhart explained that it's become too expensive to maintain the current vehicles.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve Resolution 24-76 for the purchase of (2) new 2024 Chevrolet Tahoes: (1) Command Staff and (1) New K-9. **The motion passed unanimously.**

POLICE

Resolution 24-70: request for Handicapped Parking

Officer Dumas noted that the applications were reviewed and approved.

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

Resolution 24-73: request payment for CODY Systems

Officer Dumas stated that this is a 3 year contract.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hendley, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve payment for the CODY Systems and the remaining years of the contract. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request motion to approve the collaboration with the NASD

Officer Dumas noted that Grant Funding is attached to the Motion.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve collaboration and support with the NASD. **The motion passed unanimously.**

For Municipal Council to consider the adoption of Ordinance 24-03 to amend Chapter 293 Towing and Towers, Section 5, qualification of contractor of the Norristown Municipal Code; providing a Severability Clause and providing an effective date

Officer Dumas noted that the Ordinance was drafted and advertised and now it is time for approval. There was a conversation regarding ex-offenders.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Council President Lepera**, to approve the adoption of Ordinance 24-03 amending Chapter 293. **A Roll Call Vote resulted in:**

Rebecca Smith	no
Rashaad Bates	yes
Tiffani Hendley	yes
William McCoy	no
Lauren Hughes	no
Dustin Queenan	no
Thomas Lepera	yes

Motion fails 4-3.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo