

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 7, 2024

The Council Meeting of Wednesday, August 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
Tiffani Hendley
William McCoy
Lauren Hughes
Dustin Queenan
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Leonard Lightner, Municipal Administrator; Kyle Miller, Acting Municipal Solicitor, Sean Kilkenny Law; Norristown Police Chief Jacqueline Bailey-Davis; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Amanda Ciarlante, Assistant Finance Director; Thomas O'Donnell, Norristown Fire Chief; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Bri'Ana Hawkins, Recreation Director; Keith Gordon, Code Enforcement Manager; Khal Hassan, Pennoni Engineering.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve the Minutes of the July, 16, 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 real estate issues.

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.

"Taste of Town," Sunday, August 11th from 12 pm to 5 pm at vonC Brewing Company, 1210 Stanbridge Street, Norristown. Trucks and vendors, live music, games, backpack give-away 2 to 5 pm.

Book Bag Give-Away at Central Behavioral Health Family Services, 1217 Dekalb Street, Norristown – Friday, August 9, 2024.

Help a Single Parent "Family & Community Day," Simmons Park, August 18th from 12 pm to 6 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cheryl Holmes – She lives next to an abandoned house. She said the streets are dirty – there are needles and trash. She said that she is a taxpayer.

Jesus C., Swede Street – He provided pictures of the area near the hospitality center on Church Street. He said he owns a business next to it. He said he has been patient. He said the sidewalks are used as a bathroom. He said it affects his business. He said he needs a response to this issue. He said it is due to a lack of organization.

Joe D., Arch Street – He said his side wall collapsed attached to the neighbor's house and he needs to move in. He said it is not helpful to destroy as it could jeopardize the neighbor's house. He said he needs more time to get started on it.

Susan Smith, Hartranft – She reported wires on a tree that could knock a fence down.

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street – He said there are issues with PA American Water not contacting the fire companies. He read from testimony. He also said there are fire hydrants without water and that the PUC should be informative. He said there is a documented list.

Olivia Brady – She said that Council should consider the end of using plastic bags because they cause more litter and they are not recyclable. She said that most areas around Norristown have already done it.

Sean S., Swede Street – He complained about the conditions of Church Street near the Hospitality Center and that someone should get serious about the situation. He said he can't keep having furniture hauled away. He asked for alternative options.

David S., Swede Street – He owns 4 properties and said the condition near the Hospitality Center is getting worse and that it is a health hazard and dangerous.

Angela Barrazan, Church Street – She said one of the people on the street near the Hospitality Center tried to hit her while she was sweeping. She said they have mental issues.

Fernando A. – He is part of an online radio station called VOCOS. He said he would like to know about the incident on July 27th at Eisenhower. He said there was confusion. He said there needs to be a solution to unify the community. He said it was not fair how they were treated.

Percy Thompson, Wood Street – He said he went to Public Works about the trash near the Hospitality Center including mattresses. He was told they only pick up mattresses on certain days but even when these days came, they still didn't pick them up. He said he shouldn't have to pay for someone to pick up.

Mike Kingsley, Sterigere Street – He said that one solution to the mess is affordable housing and rehabilitation beds.

David, Swede Street – He has been an attorney since 1989. He said the Hospitality Center is an ongoing problem and that several lawyers have moved from the area.

Andrea Gardner, President of the Board of the Hospitality Center – She thanked the Norristown Police Officer that came after she spoke with him. She said that the people on the street are not clients of the Hospitality Center. She said it is worse at night because the businesses are closed. She said the Center has outgrown that location and they need help to find a new facility. She said that the money comes from donors. She said the people on the street have nowhere to go.

Miguel Santos, East Marshall Street – He has a taco business. He asked for an investigation into the July 27th incident at Eisenhower School. He said they are not criminals and the police wouldn't let them through.

M. Diaz, Airy Street – He owns a business in Norristown. He also asked for an investigation into the Middle School incident on July 27th.

Paola Mendoza – He said he lived in Norristown for 20 years and has school children. He asked for an investigation into the July 27th incident because he is confused about it. He said they are not a threat.

Ana Y., Sandy Street – She said she is a business owner and pays taxes. She said the food at the July 27th event went bad.

E. Fernandez, Mentors Academy – He asked for an investigation into the July 27th event because the police made them feel like criminals.

Liliana Montoya – She also asked for an explanation about the incident.

w

Catalina E. – She asked for an investigation and asked why there were so many police cars. She said she is trying to help the community with her business.

Rocio – She said the businesses represent the community and she is a little disappointed with the police. She said they were celebrating the end of the summer sports. She said there were several police cars and they were treated like criminals. She said this used to happen and then it stopped but now it has happened again. She said they are not being treated like family.

Cruz N., 1519 Astor Street – He asked for support for tree planting and greening in our town. He said it air quality and health. He is part of the "Norristown Tree Tenders." He said that 1500 Astor Street is a concept for citywide planting. He said he hopes that Council will also support greening projects. He said there are grants that are available.

Jaime Mellado, 145 West Main Street – He has a bakery on Main Street. He has issues with the street not being cleaned. There are 2 trash cans that are piled up. He said it looks horrible for his business because he sells food items. He said it is stressful to pay his taxes. He said he found someone passed out in his business bathroom.

Jennie Choe, Barbadoes & Airy – She said the crime in this area is very bad. She received alerts on her phone about assaults. She named other crimes. She said they need more police and to bring back the diverse neighborhoods. She said there is not enough Latino leadership.

George Washington Carver Community Center – President, Vice President and Secretary – They provided information about upcoming events including Kids Café and computer classes. She said there are fundraisers, the pool is open and there will be softball at Eisenhower School. The website for more information is info@gwccc249.org. They said their 65th anniversary is next June.

President Lepera said they are working to come up with a solution to the issue on Church Street.

BUILDING & CODE COMPLIANCE

Request for Municipal Council to consider COAs and In-Kind Approvals by the HARB

Mr. Gordon noted that COAs and In-Kind Approvals have been reviewed and recommended for approval by the HARB for the following properties:

45-50 East Main Street

2 In-Kind Approvals for: 1044 Dekalb Street and 1121 West Main Street.

There was a **motion by Councilman McCoy, seconded by Councilwoman Hendley**, to approve the COA and In-Kind Approvals. **The motion passed unanimously.**

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Motion to award the Bid to the Lowest Responsible Contractor for the demo RFP and to authorize demolition at 23 E. Fornance Street

Mr. Hassan explained that Empire Services is the Lowest Responsible Contractor.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to award the Bid to the Lowest Responsible Contractor for the demo RFP and to authorize demolition at 23 E. Fornance Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request for Council's consideration of Ordinance 24-04 regarding the potential installation of a multi-way stop sign at the intersection of W. Roberts Street and Juniper Street

Mr. Hassan stated that a review was completed at W. Roberts and Juniper Streets. He said there was a safety concern with this intersection. He said it needs to be evaluated.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to consider amending Chapter 305 titled "Vehicles and Traffic," Article II, Section 305-15, titled "Stop Intersections" of the Norristown Municipal Code to add four stop signs at the intersection of W. Roberts Street and Juniper Street: authorizing the posting of appropriate signs. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PARKS & RECREATION

Resolution 24-85: Request Council to award Masterplan Contract to Simone Collins

Ms. Hawkins noted that the contract is in the amount of \$100,000 with \$25,000 in matching funds.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to award the Masterplan Contract to Simone Collins. **The motion passed unanimously.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Finance

Kathy Pfister presented a Power Point regarding the 2024 Financial Status including the Budget Summary. She noted that the Revenues are on target and there are no major issues with Expenditures.

Regarding the ARPA Funds of 2021, she noted that \$20,140,217 was received, \$8,394,157 is completed and \$6,825,455 is not fully committed. She provided data for completed projects and works in progress such as Poley Park, Sewer Evaluation, Fire Vehicles and the Elmwood Park Master Plan.

She said that final numbers for remaining projects need to be requested and a determination made of the remaining funds.

She said there is also data from the Community Feedback Survey.

Planning

Planning Director, Jayne Musonye, provided a Power Point of the Economic Development Projects. She shared that of the 34 projects, there is movement on 17 of them. They include:

The State Hospital – may hire a Professional Planner to make sure everything is in place.

48 East Main Street – proposing a 7-story apartment building.

14 West Main Street – possibly open by September.

Elmwood Park Zoo – next is Phase 2.

Trail Junction Center – construction started in summer.

Roosevelt Field – a Subdivision application will be submitted.

Arch Street Greenway – moving along.

Two-Way Dekalb Street – projected completion 2029.

Justice Center – need permits, dry wall, inspections.

Arbor Place – for sale by the Fall.

Benjamin Court – selling for \$373,000 to \$476,000.

15 & 17 East Fornance Street – properties sold in the \$375,000 range.

1020 Violet Street

722 Sandy Street – 4 story multifamily garden apt. bldg. with 76 units.

600 E. Fornance Street – pending.

Housing Rehabilitation Project – 22 homes completed.

Blight Remediation Project – pending.

Recreation

Bri’Ana Hawkins, Recreation Director, provided a brief update:

The Summer Camp was a successful 8 weeks. There’s a “Friends & Family Event” with a cookout and games. She said she is exploring funding options for a Pickle Ball Court. She said that the Fall Program begins on September 3, 2024.

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