

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
NOVEMBER 19, 2024

The Council Work Session of Tuesday, November 19, 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
William McCoy
Lauren Hughes
Dustin Queenan
Thomas Lepera

Also in attendance were:

Leonard Lightner, Municipal Administrator; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Norristown Police Chief Jacqueline Bailey-Davis; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Lt. Nick Dumas, Norristown Police Department; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Amanda Ciarlante, Assistant Finance Director; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Keith Gordon, Code Enforcement Manager; Thomas O'Donnell, Norristown Fire Chief; Bri'Ana Hawkins, Recreation Director.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the Minutes of the November 6, 2024 Council Meeting. **The motion passed 6-0.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Lepera announced that Council did not meet in Executive Session prior to tonight's meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"Thanksgiving Resource Fair" sponsored by State Representative Greg Scott on Tuesday, November 26, 2024 from 5 to 7 pm at Oak Street Health, 703 Dekalb Street, Norristown. Free

turkeys and fixings, free coat and soft winter wear, live DJ, music and more. RSVP to RepGregScott.com/Events or call 484-685-3494.

“Inaugural Chief’s Community and Police Friendsgiving Dinner” on Thursday, November 21, 2024 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at Municipal Hall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nelly Jimenez, 512 West Marshall Street – Some of what she shared were her thoughts about the safety presentation for the issue at Haws and Marshall Streets. She said she is an advocate for a safe and more inclusive space. She said that every voice highlighted the need for safer pedestrian crossing. She thanked the team for their time and dedication. She said they will turn this process into a reality.

Julie DeOrzio, 401 West Main Street – Some of what Ms. DeOrzio said was that when she worked for the Fairmount Fire Company, it was Tom O’Donnell that set the standards for the workers. She said, “To say anything less than he is an ambassador for Norristown, you know nothing about Chief O’Donnell.” She said he expects you to do what is right and he is an example of pride on the job. She said time and money will be wasted on frivolous action.

Mila Hayes, 1315 West Elm Street – Ms. Hayes shared that she is a life-long resident and a former Council member. She said she is here to support Dr. Bailey-Davis. She noted that as a Council member, she held the residents in Norristown at the highest regard. She said she has been observing the actions of Dr. Bailey-Davis in the past few months and she thinks that she is qualified for the job and that she has an understanding of the causes in Norristown. She said, “She is the best Chief we need today.” She asked that decisions are made with Norristown at the highest regard.

Tyree Wallace – He said he is here on behalf of the Police Chief. Some of what he shared is that he spent 26 years in prison for a crime he didn’t commit. He said she has the ability to bring out the best version of others. He said he is standing with her because she is a phenomenal woman.

Yvonne Platts, 410 Arch Street, Norristown – Some of what Ms. Platts shared is that Council members were sworn in to work with the Municipal Administrator to improve the quality of life and to serve all residents of Norristown but it appears there is an alternative agenda. She said she can bear witness to a time when there was no trust in this community and no respect in the past. She said it seems that Council members are working against the community. She said that Jacqueline Bailey-Davis faces the same aggressions that has plagued black female police chiefs across the nation such as racism and gender discrimination. She asked why would Council want to tell her how to do her job. She said she has served her community by hosting special dinners and served it with love and respect.

Heather Lewis, Norristown resident – Some of the things that Ms. Lewis shared was that when Tom O'Donnell was Interim Administrator, bad decisions were made. She said to the staff, "Don't pick sides until you have the real story." She noted that we should be proud to have the first female black Police Chief and said that the Police Chief gave up a lot to be here. She said she is sadly disappointed with the dismantling of all the good work that was laid before Council from when she was on Council.

Netta Johnson, formerly 1002 Arch Street - She said that all the accusations and criticisms being said against Tom O'Donnell don't reflect who he is. She said he has always shown integrity, kindness and respect to the Norristown community. She said she stands by Chief O'Donnell.

Jim Daley, 1016 Main Street, Norristown – Some of the things Mr. Daley shared is that he has some experience working with the Human Relations Commission serving as a voting member and secretary on subsequent Human Relations Commissions as well as other Boards and Committees. He said he has known Tom O'Donnell since he was a teenager. He said that before anyone makes charges against an individual, you have to have facts. He said he argued a case at the Regional Office for Human Relations. He said he is available to provide his services to Tom O'Donnell. He said this is an unnecessary smear on the community.

BUILDING & CODE COMPLIANCE

Request authorization to advertise amendments to Municipal Ordinance Chapter 241 – Property Transfer and Sewer Lateral Inspections

Mr. Gordon noted this is needed to clean up the wording and to be sure the inspections and property transfers conform for the owner-occupied properties according to the Constitution of the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the advertisement of the amendments to Municipal Ordinance Chapter 241. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Motion to award the bid to the Lowest Responsible Contractor for the Demo RFP and to authorize demolition at 542 Dekalb Street, 1111 Willow Street, 204 Franklin Street, 206 Franklin Street and 367 E. Lafayette Street.

Ted Dymtryk, Pennoni Engineering, stated that Empire reduced the price to keep it within budget bringing it down to \$571,074. He said that a Change Order will be made.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to award the bid to the Lowest Responsible Contractor and to authorize demolition. **The motion passed 6-0.**

FINANCE

Proposed 2025-2029 Capital Improvements Plan – Resolution 24-120

Kathy Pfister conducted a Power Point covering information for Administration, Finance, Fire, Police, Code, Public Works and Recreation, the 2025 CIP Projects and Equipment, Funding Source - Bonds, Funding Source – Liquid Fuels.

Ms. Pfister said that she will seek approval of the final details at the December 3, 2024 Council Meeting.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve Resolution 24-120. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Proposed 2025 Consolidated Fee Schedule – Resolution 24-121

Ms. Pfister said there are not many changes to the Fee Schedule. She said there are proposed changes to Code & Building Services and Recreation.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve Resolution 24-121. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Authorization to advertise and the first reading of Ordinance 24-07 adopting the FY 2025 Budget and establishing the Real Estate Rate for 2025

Ms. Pfister stated that the current year is on target. She presented the 2025 Budget Considerations and the 2025 Proposed Budget Summary. She noted that some budgeting options include reducing expenses, increasing taxes or use the Fund Balance which would affect the credit balance. She noted that Monday is the last Public Meeting.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the advertisement and first reading of Ordinance 24-07 which will adopt the FY 2025 Budget and establish the Real Estate Rate for 2025 increasing the millage rate from 17.25 to 18.25. **The motion passed 6-0.**

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Presentation of “The Lafayette”: a proposed multi-family development at 579 E. Lafayette Street by the Louderback Group.

There was a Power Point overview by the project owner, Joseph Grasso, Jr. The project consists of 93 apartments in a multi-family residential development. The presentation included the “Project Narrative”, the “Overview”, “Preliminary Designs”, “Amenities/Project Highlights”, “Location”, “Financing (HUD 221 (d) (4)).”

Jayne Musonye said this is Preliminary and will be coming back.

Presentation of supporting communities Marshall Street and Haws Avenue Safety Concept Design by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

Jayne Musonye said there will be a Power Point with representatives, Thom Stead, Assistant Manager and Kendra Nelson, Transportation Planner.

Ms. Nelson said they are asking permission from Council to move forward with the project.

She said the project is for the kids. She said the existing conditions are dangerous driving and 66% rolling stops. She showed a video of a solution on Lancaster Avenue called "Intersection Daylighting."

Other highlights of the Power Point include potential public engagement, project cost estimates, implementation poles and partnering with Public Works.

Resolution 24-115: Authorizing the submission of a Grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting \$500,000 in community-wide Brownfield Assessment Grant funding.

Jayne Musonye noted that since 2019, they have received \$1.2 million from the EPA for Phase 1 and 2. She said that funds were set aside for Main & Dekalb and Five Saints. She said she is asking Council for permission to apply for the Grant.

There was **a motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to authorize the Grant application to the EPA for \$500,000 in community-wide Brownfield Assessment Grant funding. **The motion passed 6-0.**

POLICE

Resolution 24-113 Handicapped Parking

Police Chief Bailey-Davis explained that the Norristown Police Department conducted an audit of the issued handicapped parking signs and want to locate and identify those locations where handicapped parking signs could be removed due to the applicant no longer residing at the residence or has moved. She said that any applicant that was unable to be reached were sent a letter and certified letter requesting that the applicant contact the Parking Division.

There was **a motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve Resolution 24-113 to identify locations where handicapped parking signs are not being used by the applicant. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 24-110: purchase of SWAT Vests from Tactical Wear LLC

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve Resolution 24-110 to purchase 13 SWAT Vests from Tactical Wear LLC. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Resolution 24-119: Request for Municipal Council to approve the Intergovernmental Agreements and Memorandum of Understanding with the Borough of Pottstown for the use and allocation of certain Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Award Funds

Lt. Dumas said they need approval to submit the Grant application.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve Resolution 24-119. **The motion passed 6-0.**

NORRISTOWN STORMWATER OPERATIONS

Resolution 24-114: Request Municipal Council to approve the LSA Grant application in the amount of \$1 million for stormwater improvements at the Hamilton and James Street culvert.

Thomas Odenigbo noted that a Resolution is needed in order to apply for the Local Share Account (LSA) Grant.

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to approve Resolution 24-114. **The motion passed 6-0.**

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Hughes, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to adjourn the Council Work Session. **The motion passed 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,
Roseann Santangelo