

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2025

The Council Meeting of Tuesday, February 4, 2025 was called to order by Council President, Rebecca Smith, 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:

William McCoy
Lauren Hughes
Mydera Robinson
Dustin Queenan
Thomas Lepera
Rashaad Bates
Rebecca Smith

Also in attendance were:

Leonard Lightner, Municipal Administrator; Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor; Lieutenant Angelucci, Norristown Police Department; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development; Kathy Pfister, Director of Finance; Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works; Keith Gordon, Code Enforcement Manager.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Robinson requested the following corrections:

The motion to approve Resolution 25-17 was made by Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Bates.

The motion to approve Resolution 25-15 was made by Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Bates.

The motion to approve Resolution 25-05 was made by Councilman Lepera, seconded by Councilwoman Robinson.

The motion to approve Resolution 25-09 was made by Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Lepera.

The motion to approve Resolution 25-13 was made by Councilman Lepera, seconded by Councilwoman Robinson.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilman Lepera, seconded by Councilwoman Robinson.

There was **a motion by Council Vice President Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the amended Minutes of the January 21, 2025 Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Smith announced that Council met in Executive Session prior to tonight's meeting to discuss Real Estate matters.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation by Norristown Rotaract: Bat Boxes in local parks

Jane Pekol, 900 Buttonwood Street - Ms. Pekol explained that she is part of a service club of local folks who do social and eco-justice initiatives. She said she is asking for preliminary planning and fundraising needed to install 1 to 3 bat boxes in Norristown parks. She said that because the bats eat their body weight in insects, they can save \$1 billion in pest control. She noted that the bat population is in severe decline but their population can grow by attracting them to a different area like a bat box which must be posted on a pole in an open area within a quarter mile of a body of water. She said that many Norristown parks fit this description.

She said they want to work with Public Works to dig holes for the poles and also to work with Bat Conservation and Management out of Carlisle, PA. She said they are not seeking funds but will pursue Grants.

She thanked Council for their consideration.

Presentation by the Norristown Public Library

Karen DeAngelo, Executive Director, and Eileen Holster, Director of Development conducted a Power Point. She noted that the Library was founded by 90 local families and that it is the third largest Library District in PA.

The Power Point highlighted "Our Mission", "The Five E's of Libraries". She said there are Children's Programs, Preschool, After School, Home School programs. There are new Teen Programs and a new Teen space.

New in 2025: Adult Programs and Services – Book Clubs, Words on Wheels, New – ESL and Adult Education; Reference and Online Services, Bookmobil and Outreach – big impact on the community. Grants for laptops, Teen Advisory Board, Keep it Safe (Drug Prevention). The Library tomorrow: on County property. Renovation - Need help with Permits. 2027-28 spaces, County services.

She showed conceptual pictures: spaces for babies, children, teens, meeting rooms, rooftop garden, teaching kitchen, Café. Highlights: recording studios.

Invest \$1 per capita now building to \$2 per capita by 2027. In-Kind – waive permits and fees for construction. Be a partner in our capital campaign – sponsor an area, sponsor local art installation. Follow us and Share.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Center Theater - Blockson Exhibit for Black History Month. Speaker Series on February 8, 13, 22 – Council Vice President Bates didn't have the times.

Local Latino Community Event – Saturday, February 8th on Marshall Street from 10 am to 8 pm.

May 5, 2025 is the last day to register to vote in the Municipality Primary.

“Senior Sweetheart Health Fair and Dance”, February 14th from 11:30 to 1 pm at the SAAC.

Public Meeting: Thursday, February 20, 2025 from 7 to 9 pm regarding the Master Site Development Plan for Elmwood Park at the Norristown PAL Center. Attend online or in person.

There is a survey on the Municipal website to provide input for the new Police Chief.

Councilwoman Robinson shared that it has been an exciting 30 days being on Council. She said she would like an opportunity to spend time one-on-one with constituents. She said she will be hosting an informal game-night style Town Hall Meeting at the Recreation Center on Thursday, February 13th. She wants to use it as a chance to engage in creative and engaging conversation. There will be UNO. It is free, all are welcome and she is looking for volunteers and ideas.

On February 8th and 9th, they will be bringing down the crane at the Justice Center site. Set-up is at 5 am and breaking down at 7 am and working until sunset.

Registration open for Summer Camp which will include a new Teen Camp.

President Smith said that the Tuesday, February 18th Council Meeting is being moved to Wednesday, February 19th.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Bates, seconded by Councilman McCoy**, to approve the date change. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Heather Lewis, Haws Avenue – She thanked the women for the Library presentation but she said it sparked a shift in her comment. She said that the Library is a worthy cause and the fees should be waived but said that there is a budget gap that continues to grow because Norristown refuses to enforce the taxes and penalties of investors who don't pay their share which makes it a conflict to honor waivers. She said there will be an event to support Latino businesses on Marshall Street on Saturday, February 8th. It will be a buy-in for the businesses because she said it is currently a ghost town because of fear of ICE activity. She noted that "Community for Change" is hosting the event. She added that there was a murder on January 11th and 4 shootings since then but there has been no word about it. She also added that "Shot Spotter" made no mention of it registering the shooting.

Yvonne Platts – She thanked Councilwoman Robinson for her desire for creative engagement with the community. She noted that \$72,125 in taxes were provided for a Public Safety Management Survey. She read from the report regarding the results containing the most significant issues and key recommendations. She said she applied for a Right-to-Know and found that some things were denied and some approved and all key recommendations were redacted. She said it stated that the community be aware of the recommendations. She said she is just trying to understand more about the recommendations.

Jim Watters, Hamilton Street - He gave his Community Safety 5-star Naughty List – PennDOT, PECO, FEMA and scams.

He said he received a scam call while in Shannondel Rehabilitation. He called the State Rep and wrote to the Attorney General who said they've been working on tracking scammers. The Federal Trade Commission passed a Policy Statement on deception which has to do with the companies that allow this.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Request for Municipal Council to review and approve Tax Assessment Appeal Settlements for 829 Swede Street, 831 Swede Street and 221 West Main Street

Leonard Lightner said that the legal team looked at this and the School District proposed a settlement of this Appeal and he suggested to move forward with approval.

Councilwoman Robinson asked for clarity about the appeal process and settlement and what it may mean to the residents.

Solicitor Kilkenny provided the information.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Hughes**, to approve the Tax Assessment Appeal Settlements. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request for Municipal Council to approve a Memorandum of Agreement between the Municipality of Norristown & Local 2335 of the International Association of Firefighters for a contract extension through December 31, 2026

Mr. Lightner said this is a request to extend the contract for 2 more years from January 2025 through December 31, 2027. He said there are no major changes but there will be 3 additional Firefighters to increase safety.

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Bates, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve the contract extension. **The motion passed unanimously.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Finance

Kathy Pfister shared that in January, the 2024 County Tax Collection Settlement was completed. Collection rate for 2024 is 93.73%, which is in range. 2025 bills go out next wk. She said that the State Auditor will be on-site this week to audit regarding the use of Liquid Fuels, for which \$800,000 is received for street maintenance. A Financial Audit will be prepared starting in late March/early April.

Planning

Jayne Musonye presented her report regarding updates on the Economic Development Projects. She said that Arbor Place is in 3 Phases. 30% are sold. Three families are moved in and more by mid-February. There will be a Grand Opening at the end of February. Regarding the State Hospital: Working on Re-Zoning language. Will ask for permission to advertise. Agreement will be signed by the Developer on February 14th in Municipal Hall. She said that this is a special event.

The CDBG COVID-19 Business Assistance Fund and the Emergency Job Retention Program:

Director Musonye named the businesses that benefitted from these.

Montgomery County Justice Center – furniture being built.
Isaac Court – 200 East Logan Street – 23 units sold; Housing Rehabilitation – pre-construction;
Trail Junction Center – early April 2025 construction.

Recreation

Cody Jones from the Recreation Center provided information about the current programs – “Line Dancing” starting February 7, 2025 from 3:30 to 5:00 pm. “Bingo” on Thursdays from 12-2 pm. Norristown Recreation Spring League – ages 5-16, April 28 – June 5, 2 games per week. Registration \$50.

Kreative Mindz Summer Camp – Ages 5-12 June 23 to August 15 (Breakfast, Lunch, Camp Merch, Swimming, Field Trips.)

Register at the Recreation Desk or on website.

Working with Rotation Productions for Movie Nights. Travel Basketball League – EN, WN, Norristown. District-Wide Basketball Evaluations/Tryouts. Ages 3-8. MLK Park.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion by Council Vice President Bates, seconded by Councilman Lepera**, to adjourn the Council Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Roseann Santangelo