

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
APRIL 15, 2025

The Council Work Session of Tuesday, April 15, 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
Mydera Robinson
Dustin Queenan
Natalie Colson
Jasmine Griffen
Rashaad Bates
Rebecca Smith

Also in attendance were:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was **a motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the Minutes from April 1, 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Smith announced that Council met in Executive Session prior to the Council Work Session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council Vice President Bates shared that there will be a “Designer Bag Bingo” at the George Washington Carver Center on May 17th at 6 pm and on June 8th the “65th Anniversary Event at Normandy Farms” from 4-8 pm.

“Spring Egg Hunt” at the Norristown Recreation Center on Wednesday, April 16th from 2 to 4 pm.

“Easter Brunch” at the Elmwood Park Zoo on April 19th from 10 am to 2 pm.

“June Jazz” – a fundraiser for the Norristown Public Library at vonC Brewery on June 10th from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

“Norristown Earth Day Event” on Saturday, April 26th from 11 am to 4 pm at the Norristown Friends Meetinghouse, 20 Jacoby Street, Norristown. Free event.

Councilman McCoy shared there will be a Juneteenth Parade meeting at the George Washington Carver Center on April 16th at 6 pm.

Zoning Hearing Board meeting in Council Chambers on April 22nd at 7 pm. Topic: Transitional Housing.

Responses to Questions from the last Council Meeting

Leonard Lightner noted there are separate responses being made for dog waste issues. He said they are trying to find the right fit to handle the issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

James Watters, Hamilton Street – He said that public safety is a big concern for him and flooding is his number one issue. He referred to a document called “Foul state of PA waterways.” He referred to the flood gauge which was turned off and then on again. He asked the Municipal Administrator, Leonard Lightner, to look

into why it was turned off. Mr. Watters said that he would argue this is “contributory negligence” and said that a class action suit could be filed.

Keith Johnson, Dekalb Street – He presented to Council information regarding PA Economical Renewable Upgrades which would enhance infrastructures. He offered free Electric Vehicle charging units with no installation, maintenance or equipment charges. He said that 50% of the proceeds go to the city. He added there would be a revenue cycle and property values would go up. He said he sent the information to Zoning.

Derek Johns, 1102 Dekalb Street – He said that the SRC cleaned up sections of Dekalb, Spruce and Willow Streets. He said they need more volunteers and would like there to be more communication about it.

Cassidy Kavanaugh, Astor Street – Regarding the State Hospital project, she asked if the school district or utility companies were consulted and did they consider the large influx of people in the area without changing the current infrastructure?

Cynthia Alvarado, 1102 Dekalb Street (SRC) – She said there needs to be more signs and fines regarding dog waste. She asked Council for their help in cleaning the trash off the streets. She said the SRC are helping people live better lives and asked Council to collaborate with them.

Arianna Williams, 1102 Dekalb Street (SRC) – She said that the SRC encounters resistance and said that “red tape” holds them back. She asked Council how they can get them to support community-led programs?

Rocco, Kohn Street – He said the neighbor blocks his driveway. He said there should be more No Parking signs. He said his neighbor feeds 10 cats and there is waste all over. He sometimes hears the neighbors making noise after midnight.

Maati Yvonne – She thanked those who have held town halls and public meetings. She said that \$100,000 was spent for a survey for the next Chief of Police but she had filed a RTK and it was redacted and she appealed it. She said that according to the Executive Summary, information can be shared with the public taxpayer. She said that the community should help with the decision for the next Police Chief. She had a sign-up sheet for a “Community Task Force.”

Alvina Hamme, Norris Hills – She thanked the Administrator for taking time to answer the Public Comment questions. She asked that the “No Truck Parking” law would be enforced more. She added that there are a lot of trash cans damaged by the trash collector. She said there needs to be a level of accountability because replacement wheels take some time.

Kaden Beegle, 1109 W. Washington Street – He is running for the at-Large Council position and said he would like to see more town halls. He said his issues would be regarding parking, drug use and litter.

Councilwoman Robinson noted that there has been some community activity every month this year.

APPOINTMENTS

Resolution 25-45: Request for Council to approve appointments to Boards, Committees and Commissions.

Mr. Lightner noted that there is a request to appoint Mydera Robinson to the Stormwater Authority Board.

There was **a motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilwoman Colson**, to approve the appointment of Mydera Robinson to the Stormwater Authority Board. **The motion passed unanimously.**

BUILDING & CODE COMPLIANCE

May 2025 Building Safety Awareness Month

Keith Gordon asked Council to draw up a Proclamation that proclaims May 2025 as Building Safety Awareness Month.

FINANCE

Resolution 25-44: Request for Council to approve a contract with Primepoint, LLC for Payroll and Human Resources software and services

Kathy Pfister noted there are current system problems and reporting and customer service issues.

She said that Finance, along with Human Resources, selected 2 references. They chose Primepoint because of their customer service and they are local and very dedicated.

There was **a motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to approve a contract with Primepoint LLC to provide payroll and HR software and services. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Public Hearing to consider the Elmwood Park Zoo Conditional Use Approval of a Master Plan and Approval of the Elmwood Park Zoo Conditional Use Master Plan.

There was **a motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to open the Public Hearing. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Solicitor Kilkenny marked Exhibits for the Public Hearing: M1 Conditional Use Application; M2 Planning's December letter from Pennoni; M3 Recommendation from Planning; M4 Notes from the Public Hearing.

The Solicitor explained that Council is acting as the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Greg Davis, Esquire, submitted Exhibits A1 through A13 as evidence: A-1 AI Zone with Power Point slides, A-2 copy of Conditional Use, A-3 June 3rd Lease Agreement, A-11 Photos, A-13 Montgomery County Planning Commission Review Letter in support dated March 13th.

He said there will be Presentations by witnesses and an opportunity to ask questions of the witnesses by Council and then a chance for Public Comment.

Solicitor Kilkenny explained and asked if any one is requesting "Party Status?"

There was no one.

He turned it over to Mr. Greg Davis, Esquire. He provided a background of the multi-phase project.

He said the first witness is Al Zone, Elmwood Park Zoo Director, who will show Power Point slides (Exhibit A-1).

Al Zone was sworn in as a witness by the court reporter.

The slides included noting that the Zoo was nominated for the best Zoo Entrance and Veterinary Hospital; the Zoo's 100th Anniversary; the land on the other side of the creek is the next point of expansion; Bridge project within the next 2 months, the Zoo is one of 238 that follow the AZA standards, connection to the Schuylkill River Bike Trail; Bee Hive exhibit; overview of the North America exhibit; train ride, wolves; multi-level parking structures; Asia exhibit.

Mr. Greg Davis provided information about the Conditional Use elements and summarized the testimony of 3 witnesses.

Sean Kilkenny presented Council an Offer of Proof.

The next 3 witnesses were sworn in by the Court Reporter: Michael Bowker, Samuel Renauro, Eric Hetzel.

Michael Bowker, licensed Professional Engineer, was presenting A-4 a CD and A-5, which was a 6-page document, was presented regarding the Zoo Use as a Special Exception.

Solicitor Kilkenny asked Council if they accept him as a Professional. There were no objections.

Mr. Bowker explained there are 4 Phases for the project. He noted that a Recreational Impact Assessment was completed and he provided details about the Zoning Relief process. He stated that Conditional Use standards, in his opinion, will not endanger nor impair neighborhood properties. It also includes utilities on access roads and ingress/regress were designed.

Solicitor Kilkenny asked Mr. Bowker if he confirms his testimony to be true to which he responded “yes.”

There were no questions from Council.

The next witness is Sam Renauro, Licensed Professional Traffic Engineer.

Greg Davis, Esq., presented Exhibits dated March 29, 2023: A-7 Impact Study – impact on traffic generated by Master Plan, A-8 Letter of Support.

Mr. Davis referred to the Supplemental Traffic Letter from Pennoni dated March 4, 2025. He said they will comply with all comments. He added that the ingress and regress should minimize traffic.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Renauro if his testimony supports what was read. He agreed that it did.

The next witness was Eric Hetzel, Professional Planner.

The Solicitor asked Council if they accept him as an expert in Planning? There were no objections.

Mr. Davis read Exhibit A-10 (Economic Impact Analysis). He summarized the impacts and noted that the Master Plan represents a sound investment.

Mr. Hetzel agreed that his testimony supports what was read.

Mr. Davis asked if there were any questions from Council. He added that Allison Lee, Pennoni consultant, was present.

Council Vice President Bates asked Al Zone, “How the Zoo is a benefit to Norristown?”

Al Zone responded that he worked closely with Norristown, he gave the Administrator a spreadsheet of the money spent (half a million dollars), all

curriculums are in line with the Norristown School District, there's a great employment program and they are the first Autism-certified Zoo.

Public Comment:

James Watters – He said he support it 100% - that's why he is going after the flooding issue.

There was **a motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to close the Public Hearing. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There was a motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates, to approve the Elmwood Park Zoo Conditional Use Master Plan to expand its facilities within its 72-acre footprint. **The motion passed 6-0.** Councilwoman Griffen recused herself because she is an EPZ employee.

Public Hearing to consider adoption of Ordinance 25-01 of 2025 for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Richard Lockhart said technology is getting ahead of us and added that the fire from charging can damage the parking garage structure. He said he is asking Council to restrict charging in parking garages because the chargers become worn from multiple use.

There was **a motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to open the Public Hearing. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Solicitor Kilkenny marked Exhibits M-1 (Municipal Presentation to the Planning Commission); M-2 Notice of Public Hearing in the Times Herald dated March 31, 2025 and April 7, 2025; M-3 Previous Presentation put into the testimony

Assistant Fire Chief Lockhart was sworn in and asked if the genesis of process that spoke about is his testimony. He confirmed it was.

Public Comment:

James Watters, Hamilton Street – He said he agrees.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Colson**, to close the Public Hearing. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to adopt Ordinance 25-01 of 2025 for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Request to advertise the Proposed Zoning Map Amendment to create a Mixed-Use Overlay of the 68 acres of the Norristown State Hospital

There was a Power Point presentation regarding the “Project History,” “The Preserve at Stony Creek” with 453 new homes and 288 apartments. It is an integrated community. Some of the elements are Grocery Store and Flex/Tech Use.

Jayne Musonye noted that they will come back again before Council for the Conditional Use.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the text amendment with a map change to go along with it and to advertise the proposed Zoning Map Amendment to create a Mixed-Use Overlay of the 68 acres of the Norristown State Hospital. **The motion passed unanimously.**

POLICE

Resolution 25-42: Motion to approve the Civil Service Resolution for entry-level Police candidates and certify the Eligibility List

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Colson**, to approve the Civil Service Eligibility List for the hiring of entry-level Police Officers and certifying names for hire. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 25-43: Request for Council to approve Offers of Conditional Employment to six (6) candidates on the entry-level Police Officer Eligibility List

Acting Police Chief Angelucci read the names of the candidates.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilman Bates**, to approve the Offers of Conditional Employment to six (6) candidates on the entry-level Police Officer Eligibility List. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Motion to request approval from the Municipal Council to permit the Norristown Police Department to apply for the 2026 Federal Community Project Funding Grant through Representative Scanlon's office.

Acting Police Chief Angelucci noted that this will cover eight locations to monitor traffic and weather conditions.

There was a **motion by Councilman Queenan, seconded by Councilwoman Colson**, to approve the application for the 2026 Federal Community Project Funding Grant. **The motion passed unanimously.**

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion by Councilman Bates, seconded by Councilman Queenan**, to adjourn the Council Work Session. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo
Clerk of Council