

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Tuesday, April 16, 2019

The Council Workshop of April 16, 2019 was called to order by Councilwoman Sanders at 6:30 PM in the Council Chambers.

There was a **Moment of Silence** followed by the **Pledge of Allegiance**. The following Council members were present:

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| Olivia Brady | Valerie Scott-Cooper | Hakim Jones | |
| Derrick Perry | Rebecca Smith | Heather Lewis | Sonya Sanders |

Also present were: Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator; Chief Mark Talbot, Norristown Police Chief; Patrick Hitchens, Acting Municipal Solicitor; Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning & Development; Norman Butts, Director of Finance, Thomas Odenigbo, Director of Public Works.

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES

There was a **motion by Councilman Perry, seconded by Councilwoman Brady**, to approve the Meeting Minutes from April 2, 2019. **The motion passed unanimously.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Sanders announced that Council discussed real estate, personnel and litigation issues in Executive Session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Municipality of Norristown will be closed on April 19, 2019.

NATIONAL DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY - Saturday, April 27th from 10 am to 2 pm. Dispose of drugs safely. Go to getsmartaboutdrugs.org.

NORRISTOWN GARDEN CONTEST - Entries must be received by Monday, June 24th and judging will take place on Wednesday, July 10th. Sponsored by the Norristown Garden Club and Keep Norristown Beautiful.

GRANT FOR CATS' ORGANIZATIONS - The program includes the trapping, neutering, vaccinating and release of stray cats. The grant is funded by Petsmart. Contact 215-219-8148 or go to forgottencats.org.

TOWN HALL - Councilwoman Scott-Cooper is holding a town hall on Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 1301 Powell Street at the Montgomery Park Apartments. Information about the upcoming census will be provided and Erica Genuardi, Director of the Recreation Department and State Representative Madeline Dean will be present.

TOWN HALL MEETING - Hosted by the Norristown Police Department - topic "Violence Prevention and Quality of Life Issues." Wednesday, April 27, 2019 at the Norristown Public Library at 5:30 pm. Contact: mbishop@norristown.org or rcalderon@norristown.org or call 610-292-8283.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carlos Gonzalez, 512 West Marshall Street, Norristown - He is opposed to the Amusement Tax saying it would impact fundraising. He asked that non-profits be exempt.

Marina Haynes, Merchantville, NJ - She is an employee of the Elmwood Park Zoo. She said she is insulted grouped together with carnivals because the zoo provides education to their customers.

Eric Mahon, Blue Bell, PA - He is a zookeeper at the Elmwood Park Zoo and noted that an Amusement Tax would not help the zoo which is just taking off.

John R. George, Owner of Five Saints Distillery, 129 E. Main Street - He noted that a message is being sent that there is a strong support opposing the tax. He suggested holding workshops for solutions to Norristown's fiscal needs.

Amy Tahtabrownian, Owner of the Styer Group, 412 Dekalb Street - She noted she has experienced a great environment, having one business for 19 years, and she is opposed to the Amusement Tax.

John Doyle, King of Prussia, PA - He has a commitment to Norristown through the Center Theatre. He said that the Arts are the soul of the community and it is more than a financial gain.

Aaron Muderick, Owner of Aaron's Crazy Putty, 700 E. Main Street, Norristown - He wants to continue public accessibility. He said that the 10% Amusement Tax is a considerable amount. He noted he recognizes the need for the Municipality to be fiscally sound but it also requires investment.

Felix Ceron, 419 West Marshall Street, Norristown - He is a business owner who moved here 24 years ago. His brothers also own businesses in Norristown. He said that the tax would make businesses suffer.

Keith Taylor, 9 W. Main Street, Norristown - He said that if the 10% is added to a ticketed event, it has to be absorbed somewhere.

Myong Ryu, Owner of August Moon, 300 E. Main Street, Norristown - Her restaurant has been open for 25 years. She commented that taxes have been going up over the years and the extra 10% Amusement Tax could mean no new customers. She commented that customers will sometimes come to her restaurant after seeing a show at the Theatre in Norristown.

Wendy Rothstein, Vice-President of the Elmwood Park Zoo - She noted that the Zoo provides education, is Autism-certified and is also a rescue facility for animals which all incur costs. She commented that Mr. Crandall Jones said during his presentation last month that this tax would not impact businesses, just consumers or customers. Ms. Rothstein added that "any impacted customer is an unhappy customer." She further commented that "there is no proposal before the Board tonight for the Amusement Tax that includes non-profits." She continued, "You are targeting non-profits. You want to target the Elmwood Park Zoo because over 90% of the money raised from this Ordinance would come from the Zoo. That's immoral, that's illegal, and we will not stand for it."

Robert Polsky, Plymouth Meeting, formerly of Norristown - He proposed a "Beer Tasting Event" on 331 or 339 East Main Street. The purpose is to present Norristown as a destination venue. He requested that Council consider this with no objection and to contact him. As far as the Amusement Tax, he said he would like to see opportunity afforded to all.

Stefania Luciani, 106 Shire Drive, Norristown - She is part of the Mural Arts Foundation on West Marshall Street. She said it has the potential to be a haven for artists and performers.

Dave Sereny, Developer, born and raised in Norristown, 221 West Main Street - He opposes the Amusement Tax and asked where will it end? Cable TV, Netflix, Playstation...? He added there are already many hurdles in bringing new businesses to Norristown. He noted that most surrounding areas offer better deals. He asked that the vote be tabled.

Brandon Jones, 1041 Swede Street, Norristown - Soon to be a business owner on 122 E. Main Street. He had moved out of Norristown and came back with his daughter and experienced open mic night and going to the theatre. He said that the tax would cut out profit for businesses and lower the quality.

Joseph Staibor, 1728 Dekalb Street, Norristown - He is CEO of Rotation Records. He said he supports the arts and showcases artists. He added he emphasizes with Council's financial constraints. He said that information about the Amusement Tax was posted on social media. He noted that residents want to attend events, eat, drink and park. With the tax, they may be forced to go outside of Norristown. He said there needs to be more time taken to consider this tax.

Al Zone, Executive Director of the Elmwood Park Zoo - He said he "tried to be a champion to bring in people." He noted that the Chamber of Commerce is a resource. He commented that he believes this Council "will do the right thing." He hopes that the Chamber of Commerce and Council will work together to come to a resolution.

Jerel Jones, 1529 Arch Street, Norristown - He proposed the idea of having a skate park in Norristown to help eliminate the negative aspect regarding skateboarding.

Richard Williams, 217 W. Airy Street, Norristown - He is an artist and a musician. He has attended open-mic nights and has worked with local businesses. He said the Arts have grown in Norristown and that the tax may be discouraging for some people.

Kym Ramsey, 401 Dekalb Street (Theatre Horizon), Norristown - She is President of the Chamber of Commerce and read from a letter she submitted to Council regarding the Amusement Tax proposal.

Erin Reilly, 401 Dekalb Street, Norristown - She noted, with respect to Mr. Jones, that there is no growing tax base and not many new businesses in Norristown but "solving the short-term with the Amusement Tax will affect the long-term." She asked that the tax be postponed and suggested forming an Economic Development Committee. She added that she has a petition with one resident writing, "Supporting the Arts is necessary to revitalize Norristown."

Sasha Yudin, 927 Green Street, Norristown - She opposed the tax and said it was discouraging.

Mary Ellen DiGregorio, 235 East Airy Street, Norristown - Ms. DiGregorio submitted a letter to be read by the Clerk of Council stating that she opposes the Amusement Tax. She noted, "this will play out and will be another FAILED attempt of someone's lies and unproven vision of Norristown..." She added, "I can only hope and pray that your God given concision (SIC) leads you in the right decision in this matter."

COMMUNICATION

There were no communication items.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Municipal Administrator, Crandall Jones, conducted a Power Point presentation regarding the local Amusement Tax.

Advertisement of Ordinance 19-04: Norristown Amusement Tax

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Sanders, seconded by Councilwoman Scott-Lewis** to advertise Ordinance 19-04 for a period of 90 days and to form a task force between Council and the public to come to an agreement. Councilman Jones voted nay. **The motion passed 5-1.**

Councilwoman Brady recused herself from voting because she works for an organization that is directly affected.

Keep Communities Flowing Grant Ratification

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Lewis**, to ratify the grant application submitted in partnership with the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove to fund the installation of a picnic grove in accordance with the Master Plan for Riverfront Park. **The motion passed unanimously.**

PLANNING & MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 19-120: Liquor License for 301 East Main Street

Director Musonye noted this agenda item (Resolution 19-120) will be postponed until the next Council meeting.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Brady, seconded by Councilman Perry**, to open the agenda to consider Minor Land Development approval for the Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC) at 116 & 120 Barbadoes Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Roger Phillips and Jim Gable, PAWC, explained they propose the construction of 2 structures for the disinfection process. Mr. Phillips noted they have abided by the comments in the Municipal Engineer's letter and added they are exempt from stormwater due to one of the structures being partially on the flood plain.

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Brady, seconded by Councilman Perry**, to approve the Minor Land Development application for 116 & 120 Barbadoes Street, Norristown, PA. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilwoman Brady**, to close the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Professional Services Agreement with Binswanger

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper, seconded by Councilwoman Smith**, to grant authorization to prepare a professional services agreement with Binswanger to perform a property assessment valuation of select properties within the Riverfront Planning Feasibility Study.

Concept Plan Presentation - 410 Dekalb Street Mixed-Use Development

John Tahtabrownian, Developer, presented his proposal through concept drawings and noted this development would be included in the Opportunity Zone. It is for a 6-story Mixed-Use luxury apartment building at 410

Dekalb Street.

PUBLIC WORKS

Bid Award for the installation of parking meter posts

There was a **motion by Councilman Perry, seconded by Councilman Jones**, to award Lenhart Contractors a public bid in the amount of \$75,317.89 for the installation of 153 new parking meter posts as well as the removal of 12 posts, 22 kiosks, and parking space striping. **The motion passed unanimously.**

BUILDING & CODES ENFORCEMENT

Certificates of Appropriateness - March 2019

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Brady, seconded by Councilman Perry**, to approve the HARB Certificates of Appropriateness for 114 East Marshall Street, 457 East Airy Street, 641 Corson Street and 31 Stanbridge Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

RECREATION

Riverfront Parks on Tap Alcohol Waiver

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Lewis**, to grant a waiver for the sale and consumption of alcohol for the Parks on Tap at Riverfront Park scheduled for August 1-4, 2019. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution 19-118: Fee Schedule Amendment

There was a **motion by Councilwoman Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Scott-Cooper**, to approve Resolution 19-118 which would amend the Municipal Fee Schedule to include a maximum fee of \$350 for park rentals by non-profit organizations. Councilman Jones voted nay. **The motion carries 6-1.**

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Public Works Report

Mr. Odenigbo reported that some of the activities of Public Works included cleaning bridges and parks, constructing sidewalks in parks and striping streets.

Planning & Development Report

Ms. Musonye reported a symposium was held for vendors, developers and property owners. She met and was in discussion with 17 developers. There was a Food and Truck Restaurant Seminar and a request to hold another Seminar in the future. There was a Public Meeting regarding the Riverfront Feasibility Study with good feedback. There is some Main Street development interest. There was a developer from Brooklyn meeting with the Redevelopment Authority regarding 5 to 7 acres east of the treatment plant. There are 2 upcoming Tours with Developers. Ms. Musonye provided information regarding the First Time Home Buyers Program, the

Facade Program and 3-D Model House training.

Recreation Report

Erica Genuardi reported on the T-Ball players and the soccer clinics. She provided an update on Latshaw Field and the Little League fields. She stated that, year-to-date, Recreation issued 5 parking permits. She noted that contracts have been put together for painting and flooring for the Recreation Center. She added that 7 families have taken advantage of the payment plan for Camp.

Office of the Administrator Report

Mr. Jones reported that the meetings for the King of Prussia Rail are moving along. He noted that Public Works and Chief O'Donnell are looking for a place to have a consolidated Fire Department. He reported on a more cleanliness promotion for J.P. Mascaro, labor agreements for the Crossing Guides and AFSCME, rehabilitation project for the Municipal building, HVAC decision which is now obsolete, department heads Senior Staff retreat.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion to adjourn the Council Meeting by Councilwoman Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Smith. The motion passed unanimously.** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo, Clerk of Council