

**NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY**  
**COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES**

**July 12, 2018**

The Council Workshop Meeting of the Municipality of Norristown was called to order by Council President, Sonya Sanders, at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers.

There was a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council President Sanders asked everyone to join in for a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following Council members were present:

Sonya Sanders, Council President, 1st District  
Derrick Perry, Council Vice-President, At-Large  
Olivia Brady, At-Large  
Hakim Jones, 4th District  
Heather Lewis, 2nd District  
Valerie Scott-Cooper, 3rd District

Also present was:

Sean Kilkenny, Municipal Solicitor  
Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development

**PRESENTATIONS:**

Norristown State Hospital Land Study

Council will hear a presentation pertaining to the land study being conducted at the Norristown State Hospital Grounds (last year, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania agreed to vacate and convey ownership of the majority of the land to the Municipality for potential future development). ***No official action will be taken.***

Jill Gaito, Technical Consultant, Michael Baker International and Tracey Vernon, Principal, Vernon Land Use, were present to discuss the Norristown State Hospital Land Study.

Ms. Vernon explained that they were retained by the PA Dept. of General Services to work with the Municipality to take a look at the State Hospital property and do a land study. She shared a handout that details the steps taken in the process. She stated she will meet with local government representatives, Commonwealth Agency representatives, the Norristown Area School District and the Municipality to get as much input as possible.

Ms. Vernon noted that Phase 1 would entail an independent real estate appraisal and an environmental site assessment to look for any issues with the buildings and to complete a Highest and Best Use Determination. She added they will also be looking at economics in the area and identify what needs are suitable for the property. This is expected to be completed at the end of August.

Ms. Vernon explained that Phase 2 will include meetings with local land planning stakeholders to determine acceptable development scenarios and provide additional information for the feasibility study. Phase 2 will also include preparing recommendations and cost estimates for utility separation. A Public Meeting is also planned.

Ms. Gaito noted that the designated farm area is not included in the study and that they are looking at land areas in both West Norriton and East Norriton.

Ms. Vernon noted that Phase 3 will include recommendations for the best use of the property.

Council asked that the residents be included to provide input by reaching out to schedule meetings and putting a survey on the Municipal website. Community neighborhood groups and local residents information will be provided by Director Musonye to the reps.

Council discussed what type of use they would like to see on this property.

#### Elmwood Park Zoo Parking Expansion

Council will be presented with a proposal from Elmwood Park Zoo to expand available parking at the Zoo. ***No official action will be taken.***

Mr. Sean Cullen, Cullen & Conwell, explained that they need Council's support for this project and noted that this expansion is a way to get people into the County. He added that the EP Zoo is recognized as one of the top zoos in the County. He added that if the parking issue can be eliminated, they can reach the Philadelphia Zoo numbers.

Mr. Cullen noted that the proposal is to use the available open space designated by the state behind the ball fields. This land is a dying forest due to an invasive species.

Mr. Cullen noted that this can be stopped by saving the hardwoods. He noted they need permission to carve out the area and put additional parking and include a wooden path and a nature walk. He noted they need to get into the space and preserve some of the areas because runoff is creating a water retention problem. He continued that land protection will help to connect to the trail.

Mr. Al Zone, Executive Director of the Elmwood Park Zoo, added that the land for the Schuylkill River Bike Trail also needs to be protected.

Mr. Eustace, P.E., referred to the plans representing the limits of the Municipal-owned property. He noted that when the documents were submitted to the state, the marked area was not part of the Municipality and can not be leased to the Elmwood Park Zoo.

Mr. Eustace noted that the current easement is to be vacated and land of equal size or value must be given back. He added that after flows were determined and field spotting done, it was proposed that an easement be put between the trail and stream.

Mr. Eustace also provided information about walls, walkways, a pedestrian bridge, and soil studies.

There was a presentation regarding the state of the woods and the solutions to improve it

such as restoring the native trees, using storm water, swales and bio-retention areas. He added they need to improve the habitat by putting in plants to control invasives.

There was conversation about how to bring passengers from the Zoo to downtown. Mr. Al Zone noted they are working with SEPTA on a plan.

Director Musonye noted that the Elmwood Park Zoo representatives are going before the Zoning Hearing Board and Council must sign off on the application. She added they will be back for land development.

There was also discussion about Local Share, which is money available from casino revenues throughout the county. Ms. Musonye wanted to make Council aware that the Zoo is trying to apply for \$500,000.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There was no Public Comment.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**All in favor. Motion carries 6-0.**

There was a motion by Olivia Brady with a second by to ADJOURNMENT:. A Roll Call Vote resulted in:

Ayes: Brady, Jones, Lewis, Perry, Sanders, Scott-Cooper

Absent: Smith

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo