

NORRISTOWN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

March 20, 2018

The Council Workshop Meeting of the Municipality of Norristown was called to order by Council President, Sonya 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:

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

Also present were:

Crandall Jones, Municipal Administrator
Thomas Odenigbo, Public Works Director
Mark Talbot, Chief of Police
Rochelle Rawlins, Assistant Director of Finance
Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Municipal Development
Khal Hassan, Municipal Engineer (Pennoni Associates)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Meeting Minutes from 3-6-2018

Minutes approved with revision to clarify that Ms. Arthur has requested trash fees waived.

Motion passes (6-0).

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

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

Absent: Perry

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Council President Sonya Sanders announced that there was an executive session of council to discuss real estate and personnel matters.

PRESENTATIONS:

NLC Conference: Lessons Learned from Councilmembers Scott-Cooper & Lewis

Councilmembers Scott-Cooper and Lewis will address Council on the lessons they learned from attending the 2018 National League of Cities Conference in Washington D.C.

Councilmember Scott-Cooper explained that the National League of Cities (NLC) has been around for decades and that Norristown joined the organization last year (2017). She went on to say that NLC offer numerous learning opportunities for council to bring back to the community to benefit Norristown. Examples of topics discussed at the conference include: ways to combat the opioid crisis, the issue of marijuana businesses in local communities. A specific example of how Norristown's membership to NLC has benefited Norristown is the resiliency competition that the Municipality won. As a result of winning, Norristown will receive direct technical assistance for experts at NLC to help us plan our the redevelopment of our riverfront.

Municipal Administrator Crandall Jones clarified that the competition was not a grant and will not result in a monetary award. The competition will result in technical assistance.

Councilmember Scott-Cooper also encouraged more members of council to attend NLC conferences as there are more opportunities that one or two attendees can cover alone.

Councilmember Lewis also attended the Conference in DC where she accepted an 2nd place award from NLC highlighting outstanding municipal programs aimed at promoting diversity for Norristown's Citizens Leadership Academy

Councilmember Scott-Cooper added that NLC is a great opportunity to have local issues addressed at the federal level as members of NLC met with federal politicians to convey our interests and address our issues. The PA officials visit Senator Pat Toomey's Office in Washington. There are also vendors are there to offer services to enhance services gives us a broad base to learn.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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ART EXHIBIT, Friday March 23

Expressive Paths will be hosting an art exhibit at municipal hall on Friday March 23. The artwork were created by youth in the program and will be on display at Municipal Hall for 3 to 4 weeks.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Prior to accepting any public comment, Council President Sonya Sanders asked the Municipal Solicitor to explain the procedures for public comment.

The Municipal Solicitor explained that the public comment portion of the meeting is not meant to start a discuss or to have questions posed to and/or answered by Council. The purpose of public comment is to allow the public to provide input to Council without a response.

Doris Smith Starks

Ms. Starks, a long time resident and one of Norristown Town watch coordinators, asked Council about the ongoing issues that have been taking place over the past few months with the Town Watch Office in Municipal Hall. After stating that she had a contract regarding the use of the Town Watch Office, Ms. Starks expressed her love as well as the love of Norristown residents for Town Watch and that the program is about more than just reporting crime. Ms. Starks explained that Town Watch is involved in everything Norristown.

Ms. Starks continued by stating that Townwatch volunteers use their own money to do things that Council might not see or know about, and will continue to be active in the community. She expressed her opinion that Townwatch has been treated unfairly and that the lack of communication is disrespectful to the Townwatch volunteers.

Municipal Administrator Crandall Jones spoke to clarify that there was no contract, and that there is just a resolution that permitted the continuation of the Townwatch volunteer program after the Weed and Seed funds ended. Mr. Jones went on to say that at no point did the Municipality make a financial investment to the Townwatch program, and that the Municipality have supported Townwatch with the repair of equipment but now the equipment is too old. Mr. Jones continued by stating that he had conversations with Ms. Starks about the service issues in the Townwatch Office and to explain that the Municipality Capital Improvement Plan funds has \$1 Million allocated towards correction service issues throughout Municipal Hall. The issues are a result of the building lacking adequate wiring and internet. Renovations to Municipal Hall have already started with the purchase and relocation of new servers as well as the eventual re-wiring of Municipal Hall. Mr. Jones stated that the process for upgrading and replacing equipment is underway, but equipment utilized by staff for day-to-day operations must take priority over the needs of volunteers. This process has not targeted any individual or group, it just a process that takes time and is ongoing. Mr. Jones then stated that once the equipment needs of staff have been addressed, he has given instruction to take the best of the replaced computers to provide for townwatch, and that all this information was shared with Ms. Starks.

Anne Harrington

Ms. Harrington, representative of the North End Townwatch, informed Council that Ms. Starks and herself purchased furniture currently in the Townwatch Office utilizing state grant funds. She also expressed concern about what she heard was the potential closure/relocation of the Townwatch Office in Municipal Hall.

Mary Ellen DeGregorio

Ms. DeGregorio started by commending the Public Works Crews for the great job they did yesterday with the snow. Plows were going by regularly, but expressed disappointment with lack of tickets being issued for vehicles that did not adhere to the snow emergency regulations. There were still vehicles on the street that blocked traffic.

Ms. DeGregorio informed Council that she considers the municipal response to the Townwatch situation as unacceptable and reminded Council of the large senior population in Norristown that does not want to deal technology. She pointed out that applications for the new Senior Housing Project (Montgomery Park) are not online and that nothing has been provided by Council about Montgomery Park Senior Housing.

Ms. DeGregorio stated that residents come to her for information versus the Municipality and all residents want is respect. In conclusion, Ms. DeGregorio called on Council to get Ms. Starks, citing and the Townwatch what they need and provide the public with an estimated timeframe.

Heather Lewis

Councilmember Heather Lewis explained that she, as a resident of Norristown and not on behalf of council, had offered Townwatch use of the offices of CADCOM on Main Street and to assist Townwatch during the renovations of Municipal Hall. Councilmember Lewis also point out the negative consequences of making assumptions and encouraged residents to bring solutions rather than complaints to municipal council meetings.

COMMUNICATION:

There was no communication.

ITEMS FOR ACTION:

Municipal Engineer

Resolution 18-119: Traffic Signal System Management Agreement Authorization

Council will consider authorizing the Council President to sign an agreement with PennDOT where the ownership and maintenance responsibility of designated traffic signals currently owned by the Municipality will be transferred to PennDOT.

There was a motion by President Sanders to open the agenda and move the Municipal Engineer's item before presentations. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Scott Cooper with all in favor (6-0).

The Municipal Engineer presented map illustrating traffic lights that will be covered in the proposed PennDOT agreement. There have been similar agreement signed by neighboring Municipality. Penn Dot would assume ownership of the designated traffic signals. The Engineer conveyed that Norristown would not responsible for maintenance and that the agreement stands to benefit Norristown.

The Engineer explained that PennDOT will not be installing additional lights, that the Municipality will be notified of work needed for maintenance, and expressed confidence that if deterioration is caused by new traffic flow, PennDot will work with the Municipality to alleviate the condition.

Council President Sanders then asked for public comment. After a request from residents asking to see the map of designated traffic signals that PennDOT would assume ownership of through this agreement, there was no public comment.

Motion Passes (6-0)

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

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

Absent: Perry

PUBLIC SAFETY:

Handicapped Parking Resolution 18-120

Motion to approve or deny Resolution No. 18-120 regarding requests for disabled parking spaces.

Police Chief Mark Talbot explained that the request is to establish handicap parking and asked Council only consider the request pertaining to spruce street.

Motion passes (6-0)

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

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

Absent: Perry

PLANNING AND MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT:

Recommendation to Award Professional Services Agreement for Environmental Services

Recommendation to award Professional Services Agreement to Terraphase Engineering to complete a site characterization scope of work at 350 E Main Street.

Director of Planning and Municipal Development Jayne Musonye explained that this award was the next step to getting industrial sites to be reused due the Municipality's work with local Brownfields. Ms. Musonye explained that EPA funds have been used to help inventory potential contaminated properties.

The Director went on to explain that Phase I and II Environmental studies have been completed and that the owners of the property at 350 E. Main Street came here for industrial reuse program. The next step in the program would be to prep properties ready for reuse.

The award presented tonight went through Request for Proposals process with six (6) proposals being submitted. Terraface engineering from west coast was the most thorough proposal, and staff recommends awarding them contract to work on how to actually clean property.

Motion passes (6-0)

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

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

Absent: Perry

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR:

Advertisement of Ordinance 18-01: Mobile Food Vendors

Council will continue to consider advertising Ordinance 18-01, which would establish a new policy for licensing and inspecting food trucks and set new regulations regarding the operation of mobile food vendors in the Municipality.

Municipal Administrator Crandall Jones explained that this is a continuation of a prior discussion that was tabled and reviewed that directive that Council directed staff to examine and revise policy for mobile food vendors.

Since the last meeting, the proposed ordinance has been amended to allow on food trucks to operation Harding blvd. for Elmwood Park and the future site of the Norristown Rec. Center, on Lafayette in front of transit center, and on Swede from Lafayette to Airy.

Mr. Jones informed Council that in a meeting with the County about the progress of the County Campus Plan and county and municipal staff discuss the impact of the new food truck policy and provide our feedback to enhance the opening onto Main Street to drive people to Main Street for purposes of redevelopment.

Mr. Jones explained that every year the County requests a waiver from Council to allow food trucks on Swede in front of the Courthouse for the duration of summer. The new policy would require all food trucks to obtain county health inspection and an annual food truck license from the Municipality.

A recommendation was made to amend the propose ordinance to include the provision of a sunset clause that will restrict the operation of food trucks on Swede street after the completion of the County Campus Project.

There was a motion by Heather Lewis with a second by Rebecca Smith to Motion. A Roll Call Vote resulted in:

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

Absent: Perry

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Police Report

Police Chief Mark Talbot provided the following updates:

- Ended month down 8%. busy month. Most troubling officer involved shooting. DA determined appropriate use of force. Double Homicide. Made arrest within 24 hours.
- Had a collaboartive meeting with NAACP as well as with Guardenzia to develop an

opioid strategy. Police leadership also met with Director of Excess Services, mental care organization.

- Other meetings included the Norristown Area PTO and the County's new Geographic Prosecution Team. Partnership is working out well and will allow for more in depth conversations about cases.
- MontCo. is the only area were numbers are going down for opioid cases.
- Snow Emergency: we did write tickets for the declaration. We were called away at certain times to cover other duties.

Fire Report

Municipal Administrator Crandall Jones provided a report on behalf of the Norristown Fire Dept. Department activity included preparation meetings for the eagles parade in center city, retreat with staff and council, and the local HUB partnership.

Code Enforcement Report

Municipal Administrator Crandall Jones provided a report on behalf of the Norristown Dept. of Code Enforcement.

The search for a new code manager is well underway, with 32 applications being accepted for consideration. The interview panel will consist of Mr. Jones, the interim Code Manager, and the Municipality's third party code inspection service (Code Inc.). We will narrow the field of applicants to about 10 or 12 and then conduct interviews. Thanks to the efforts of the previous code manager, Michael Simonson, the dept. has a higher reputation that has result in a higher quality pool of applicants.

Non-presenting Department Reports

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion passes (6-0)

There was a motion by Olivia Brady with a second by Valerie Scott-Cooper to Motion. A Roll Call Vote resulted in:

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

Absent: Perry

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann M. Santangelo