



# **BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS ORIENTATION MANUAL**

A Handbook for the Municipality of Norristown

Municipality of Norristown  
235 E. Airy St.  
Norristown, PA 19401  
[www.norristown.org](http://www.norristown.org)

# *MUNICIPALITY OF NORRISTOWN BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS*

*WELCOME! The Municipality of Norristown Municipal Council, Municipal Administrator and Municipal Staff are pleased you are interested in becoming a member of one of the municipality's boards, commissions or committees. Our municipality prides itself on citizen involvement in all issues.*

*As a citizen member, you will serve in an advisory capacity to the Municipal Council, performing a valuable service by addressing community issues and needs. Municipal Council members look forward to your contribution as we work together providing efficient municipal services responsive to local needs and expectations.*

*The Municipal Council appreciates your willingness to work in this capacity and hopes your experience will be stimulating, enjoyable and satisfying.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

### ***Role, Authority, Rules and Regulations***

The Municipal Council has established several boards, commissions and committees to review municipality programs, projects and community issues. These groups provide greater community participation and input into local government and facilitate quality decisions by the Municipal Council. This handbook, designed as an orientation and informational tool to assist interested citizens, presents a statement of purpose, policies and guidelines outlining the role, operation, and responsibilities of each of the municipality boards, commissions and councils.

These boards, commissions and committees have been created either by council adoption of a resolution (policy) or ordinance (law). Some of these groups are considered permanent such as the Planning Commission, responsible for the physical development of the municipality, or Zoning Hearing Board which has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and render final adjudications on zoning matters.

Municipality boards, commissions and committees are not involved in the administration or operation of municipality departments and may not direct administrative staff to initiate programs, conduct major studies or establish official policy without the approval of the Municipal Council. Municipal Staff members are available to provide general staff assistance to board, commissions, committees and authorities. Members need to stay informed on subjects of interest to their specific board, commission, council or authority. Conscientious attendance is also a fundamental responsibility.

Individual board, commission and committee members should present views and recommendations representing the whole as a body not personal individual view. Members expressing views not approved by the majority of the board, commission or committee should indicate their opinions are viewed as “private citizens.” Individual opinions must be identified as such.

Public statements should not include promises that may be construed to be binding on the board, commission, committee, Municipal Council or staff. When making a public statement, members should indicate that the board, commission or committee’s actions are recommendations and that final action will be taken by the Municipal Council. Each member should represent the overall “public good” and not an exclusive group or special interest.

### ***GUIDELINES FOR CITIZEN MEMBERS***

Work to establish a good relationship with other committee members. The success or failure of committee efforts may be dependent upon the degree of cooperation evident among the individual members of the body. Each member should keep in mind these important points:

- Show respect for another's viewpoint.
- Allow others adequate time to fully present their views before making comments.
- Be open and honest.
- Make new members welcome and help them become acquainted with their duties.
- Strive to minimize political opinions among members.

***MUNICIPAL COUNCIL COMMITMENT TOWARD CITIZEN BOARDS,  
COMMISSIONS and COMMITTEES***

Inviting citizens to participate in municipal-level decision making through appointed boards and commissions has compelling appeal to our democratic values. Indeed, with proper guidance and oversight from the Municipal Council, citizen boards can make significant contributions to the mission of Municipality of Norristown government. Many citizen boards and commissions become indispensable to the affairs of the municipality.

Through this orientation instrument, the Municipal Council is taking preventative measures to increase the likelihood that citizen boards and commissions can be of public service and will realize a sense of civic satisfaction as the result of their volunteer contributions and will be willing to “step up to the plate” when the Municipal Council calls upon their services in the future. These measures include:

- Provide written clarity and specificity to a citizen board’s mission.
- Ensure that the citizen board has sufficient resources—time, budget, and staff—to carry out its mission.
- Provide citizen board member recruitment process that goes deep into the community and beyond individual governing body members’ political associations.
- Provide for communication among the Municipal Council so that citizen board appointments lead to a balanced representation of interests on the respective citizen board.
- Provide adequate education for newly appointed citizen board members that includes information about the organization and decision processes of the Municipality; the nature of the citizen board’s responsibility; protocols and processes for effective meetings and how the citizen board should communicate with the Municipal Council and with the community.
- Stay current with citizen boards’ work through reading their agendas and minutes, and the designation of a Board of Supervisor member as liaison.

## ***CONFLICT OF INTEREST – CODE OF ETHICS***

The Municipal Council has adopted §41.9-901, as the Code of Ethics of Municipality of Norristown. It is the public and corporate responsibility of the municipality to ensure that its officers and employees maintain the highest ethical standards in the course of their official duties.

Under this Board Policy, “Officer or Employee” is defined to include citizen appointees. Financial disclosure of interests by certain individuals in decision-making positions within Municipality government is required. Statement of Financial Interest (State Ethics Form) will be completed before May 1 of each year.

The Code of Ethics adopted by the Municipal Council of Municipality of Norristown is multi-purpose:

- To require public disclosure of financial interests which may affect the actions of people in decision-making positions or positions where those people can influence decisions.
- To require people in decision-making positions to avoid participating in actions where a financial interest may be affected.
- To expect a citizen board member to serve the municipality in an environment free of arrangements, relationships, and situations which may place the member in an embarrassing or ethically questionable position.
- To require a citizen board member to make full and prompt disclosure, in writing, to the Municipal Administrator, of any arrangement, relationship or situation which may involve a conflict of interest, including but not limited to:
  - Any outside interest that materially encroaches on the time or attention which the citizen board member is expected to devote to the service to the municipality;
  - Any employment relationship, whether or not for compensation, of citizen board member, with a vendor doing or seeking to do business with the municipality;
  - Ownership by a citizen board member of any financial interest in a vendor doing or seeking to do business with the municipality and/or;
  - Any other arrangement, relationship, or situation, including family or personal relationships which may inhibit the citizen board member’s impartiality in the discharge of his service to the municipality.

When a matter in which members have a direct or indirect financial interest comes before the citizen board, commission, committee or authority, member(s) must disqualify themselves from participating in deliberation or abstain from voting. Members should explain why they are abstaining. If the information is not voluntarily given, the chair should ask for the reason. If no explanation is given, the minutes should state that the member declined to give a reason for abstaining. After making such disqualifying statement, the member should leave the table and return only upon conclusion of the matter. If there is any doubt as to whether to abstain, the Municipality Solicitor will provide guidance.

Any disclosure made pursuant to the requirements of the Code of Ethics shall be maintained by the municipality in strictest confidence except when the interests of the municipality require disclosure or where required by law.

*MUNICIPALITY OF NORRISTOWN*

NOTICE OF AN UNSCHEDULED VACANCY ON A MUNICIPAL CITIZEN

BOARD, COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an unscheduled vacancy exists on the following citizen board, commission or committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Term from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Citizens interested in obtaining further information regarding the unscheduled vacancy are requested to contact the Municipal Administrator, Municipality of Norristown, 235 E. Airy St, Norristown, PA 19401, (610) 272-8080 or fax (610) 275-0687.

I, Crandall O. Jones, Municipal Administrator, do hereby certify that the above Notice of Unscheduled Vacancy was posted in accordance with Municipal Council Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
CRANDALL O. JONES  
MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR

Effective Date of Notice: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Closing Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***STRUCTURE***

Citizen boards, committees, and commissions provide input to the Municipal Council; citizen members advise and assist the Municipal Council in special issue areas. Opening additional lines of communication between the general public and the Municipal Council, such groups help assure that municipal government is responsive to citizens. Each citizen board, commission and committee make recommendations to the Municipal Council; they do not determine or establish policy or administrative direction.

- Citizen Boards, Committees, and Commissions benefits include:
- Focusing attention on specific issue areas;
- Encouraging citizen participation;
- Providing a viewpoint from community neighborhoods and;
- Making recommendations based on thorough and in-depth analysis of alternatives from a citizen's perspective

## ***APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS***

*(Chapter C, Article VIII §41.8 - 802 of the Municipal Code)*

Council shall appoint qualified citizens to boards, commissions, authorities or other agencies of the Municipality, making the greatest possible use of the talents and interests of such citizens, thereby promoting the public interest and welfare of the Municipality.

Appointment to a citizen board shall be made after acceptance of the resignation by the Municipal Council and as long as adequate time is given for advertising the vacancy, receipt of application, and interview is conducted. However, if an emergency exists, the Municipal Council may fill the vacancy immediately; such appointments shall be on an "acting" basis until the final appointment is made.

Applications can be obtained in person at the Municipality building or by phone to (610) 270-0421. Applications remain on file for a period of one year from the date of filing unless the applicant requests withdrawal. Applicants shall be interviewed by at least two (2) members of the Municipal Council. In the event an applicant is not selected, the application will remain on file for one year for consideration in filling future vacancies. Appointments are made by the Municipal Council at regular business meetings; all applicants are notified by mail as soon as a decision has been made.

***ORIENTATION***  
***Municipality of Norristown***  
***Board, Commission and Committee Authorities***

Blighted Property Removal Committee\*

Board of Code Appeals\*

Civil Service Commission\*

Design Review Board\*

Historical Architectural Review Board\*

Human Relations Commission

Keep Norristown Beautiful

Norristown Municipal Waste Authority

Norristown Stormwater Authority

Planning Commission

Recreation Committee

Zoning Hearing Board

\*Membership on some Boards require specific experience or certification. Asterisks illustrate those boards which entails special membership requirements. Please read the descriptions below to learn more about the functions and responsibilities of each board.

## ***Blighted Property Removal Committee***

### **Meeting Times**

As needed (meeting times are set at the first meeting in January)

### **Membership** (*Ch. 8, §8-2 of the Municipal Code*)

The blighted property removal committee consists of four (4) members, one of whom may be a member of the Municipal Council, appointed and confirmed by the Municipal Council of Norristown. All approvals and confirmations of the Council's appointments shall be by written resolution specifically identifying the initiation and termination of the terms of office of each member appointed to the commission.

The length of the membership for the Blighted Property Removal Committee is a three-year term. The committee is made of four members which include:

- 1 Council Member
- 1 Planning Commission Member
- 1 Representative from the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority
- 1 Staff Member

**Length of Membership**      4 Year Term

### **Terms of Office**

The members of the Property Review Committee shall serve for staggered four-year terms beginning with the date of their appointment and ending on December 31 of the year they were appointed. Appointments to fill vacancies shall be only for the unexpired portion of a term ending at the end of the calendar year.

### **Responsibilities**

The Blighted Property Review Committee shall have power and authority to operate under the Act to provide for the designation, certification and removal of blighted property as defined in the Act, to operate in conjunction with and cooperate with the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Montgomery bringing about the acquisition by the exercise of eminent domain or otherwise, as authorized by the Act, and elimination of blighted property within the Municipality; and to this end, said Committee shall have all power and authority to do such acts and deeds as are necessary and appropriate to carry out the goals of the Act and this chapter.

## ***Board of Code Appeals***

### **Meeting Times**

As needed (meeting times are set at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in January)

### **Membership** (*Ch. 9, §9-1 of the Municipal Code*)

The board of code appeals consists of three (3) members who are qualified by experience and training to pass on matters pertaining to building construction, property maintenance, hazards of fire, explosions, hazardous and dangerous conditions and fire protection systems, and who are not employees or elected officials of the Municipality nor members of the Municipality's Code Administrators.

The members of the Board of Code Appeals shall be appointed by Municipal Council and shall have staggered and overlapping terms of three years. Members may be reappointed by Council following the expiration of their terms.

The Municipal Council may appoint an alternate member, who may be called upon by the Chairman of the Board to consider appeals during the absence or disqualification of a member of the Board. Alternate members shall possess the same qualifications required for Board membership.

The members of the Norristown Board of Code Appeals shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for such expenses as may be related to the performance of their duties.

The Board shall meet on at least an annual basis in January, and thereafter as required, and shall elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary to serve for each year.

The members of the Norristown Board of Code Appeals shall serve at the pleasure of the Municipal Council and may be removed at any time for any reason or no reason by an affirmative vote of the majority of the members of the Municipal Council.

**Length of Membership**                      3 Year Term

### **Membership Requirements**

Members must be residents who possess professional experience applicants must be qualified by experience and training on matters pertaining to building construction, property maintenance, fire hazards, etc.)

### **Responsibilities**

The Board shall hear all appeals arising from or relating to any matter arising out of the Municipality's enforcement of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code, the Norristown Property Maintenance Code, and the Norristown Fire Code. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the Board shall issue a written decision within five (5) days regarding the outcome of the appeal.

## ***Civil Service Commission***

### **Meeting Times**

As needed (meeting times are set at the first meeting in January)

### **Membership** (*Ch. 4 Article X §4 - 67 of the Municipal Code*)

The membership of the Commission consists of three (3) residents of the Municipality. Their terms of office shall be six years and shall be fixed that the term of office of one member shall expire every other year at the end of the calendar year.

**Length of Membership**      6 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Civil Service Commission enforces the rules and regulations pertaining to civil service employees and certifies the eligibility of qualified applicants for positions and promotions within the Norristown Police and Fire Departments. The Commission can hear the appeal of any person suspended, reduced in rank, or removed from the Norristown Police or Fire Department in accordance to the Civil Service Rules and Regulations adopted by the Municipal Council of Norristown.

## ***Design Review Board***

### **Meeting times**

Meetings are held at 6:30pm in Council Chambers on the 2nd Wednesday of every month.

### **Membership** (*Ch. 320 Article IX §320 - 89 of the Municipal Code*)

The length of the membership for the Design Review Board is a six-year term. The committee is made of five (5) members which include:

- 1 Council Member
- 1 Planning Commission Member
- 1 Design Professional
- 1 Representative of the Developer Community
- 1 Council Appointee

**Length of Membership**      6 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Design Review Board was established for the purpose of reviewing the design, layout, and other features of proposed developments in order to ensure that their design is in keeping with the intent and purposes set forth in Norristown's Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 320).

## ***Historical Architectural Review Board***

### **Meeting times**

The Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the council chambers of the Norristown Municipal Building (235 E. Airy Street).

### **Membership** (*Ch. 31 Article IV §31 - 7 of the Municipal Code*)

The membership of the board consists of seven (7) members; one an architect, one a licensed real estate broker, one a Municipality building inspector, one a member of the Board of Directors of the Norristown Preservation Society, one with knowledge of building trades and two members be persons with demonstrated interest, knowledge, ability, experience or expertise in restoration, historic rehabilitation or neighborhood conservation or revitalization who have interest in the preservation of the HARB Zones, each of whom reside in one of the Municipality's Historic Districts.

**Length of Membership**      4 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) is appointed to put forth recommendations and advise the Municipal Council regarding the advisability of issuing any certificate of appropriateness required to be issued pursuant to the Historic District Act in one of the designated Norristown Historic Districts. These certificates serve to promote, protect, enhance, perpetuate, and preserve the cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history of Norristown's Historical Districts.

## ***Human Relations Commission***

### **Meeting times**

As needed (meeting times are set at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in January)

### **Membership** (*Ch. 37, §37 - 2 of the Municipal Code*)

The Commission shall consist of nine (9) members. All members shall be residents of the Borough of Norristown, broadly representing racial, religious or ethnic groups in the community. Applications for membership shall be reviewed by the search committee, with qualified names to be submitted to the Municipal Administrator with recommendations for appointment. All appointments to the Commission shall be made by the Mayor with the advice and consent of four (4) members of the Council.

Of the nine (9) members first appointed, two (2) shall be appointed for one (1) year, two (2) shall be appointed for two (2) years, two (2) shall be appointed for three (3) years, two (2) shall be appointed for four (4) years, and one (1) shall be appointed for five (5) years. Thereafter, all appointments shall be for five (5) years.

The Commission shall promptly notify the Municipal Administrator and Council of any vacancies which occur. Appointments to fill vacancies shall be only for the unexpired portion of the term.

**Length of Membership**      3 Year Term

### **Membership Requirements**

Resident or Business Owner in the Municipality of Norristown

### **Responsibilities**

The Norristown Human Relations Commission was established in 2018 for the purpose of hearing and processing public complaints on the grounds of discrimination as a means of ensuring equality and equal opportunity for all citizens, regardless of actual or perceived race, color, age, religious creed, ancestry, sex, national origin, handicap or use of guide or support animals because of blindness, deafness or physical handicap of the user or because the user is a handler or trainer of support or guide animals, or because of an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in all matters effecting employment, housing and commercial property and public accommodation, and to safeguard the right of all persons to remain free of discrimination or discriminatory practices in any of the foregoing aspects of their lives.

## ***Keep Norristown Beautiful Advisory Board***

### **Meeting times**

As needed (minimum of one each quarter)

### **Membership** (*Resolution 17-172 of 2017 on December 5, 2017*)

The membership of the board shall consist of a minimum of six (6) members and a maximum of ten (10) members with the following entities represented: (1) Norristown Municipal Council, (1) Norristown Public Works, (1) Norristown Police Department, (1) Norristown Chamber of Commerce, (3-4) Community/Civic Leaders and (1) John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove.

**Length of Membership**      2 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Keep Norristown Beautiful Advisory Board shall only serve as an advisory body that offers their recommendations to the affiliate's Executive Director and volunteer for affiliate programs and events. The advisory board members possess no executive authority, cannot act as the official representative of the affiliate, and is not permitted to use, create, or distribute any materials that utilizing the logo or brand of Keep Norristown Beautiful without the consent of the affiliate's Executive Director.

Members of the Advisory Board shall serve a term of two years. Members can be reappointed as long as they attend 60% of Board meetings annually and actively contribute to the efforts of the affiliate.

## ***Norristown Municipal Waste Authority***

### **Meetings Times**

The Norristown Municipal Waste Authority meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

### **Membership** (*Ch. 63, §63 – 7 of the Municipal Code*)

The length of the membership for the Municipal Waste Authority is a five-year term. The Authority is governed by five members. Members must be residents of the Municipality of Norristown.

**Length of Membership**      5 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The initial project to be undertaken by said Authority is to acquire, hold, construct, finance, improve, maintain, operate, own and lease, either in the capacity of lessor or lessee, presently existing sewer treatment works, interceptors, sewer lines and such additions as may be constructed or added thereto and all other facilities in connection therewith.

### **Independent Operation**

While the Waste Authority members are appointed by the Municipal Council, the Norristown Municipal Waste Authority operates independently of the Municipality. Their office are located at 25 E. Marshall St. Learn more about the Authority's operations by visiting the Norristown Municipal Waste Authority Website.

## *Norristown Stormwater Authority*

### **Meetings Times**

The Norristown Stormwater Authority meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month.

### **Membership**

The length of the membership for the Stormwater Authority is a five-year term. The Authority is governed by five members. Members must be residents of the Municipality of Norristown.

**Length of Membership**      5-Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

Norristown is required to complete pollutant reduction planning (PRP) and implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce pollution loadings entering our local waterways. To do this, a user fee will be established by the authority board to cover investments in infrastructure. All property owners with greater than 300 square feet of impervious surfaces on their property will pay a fee. The amount will differ depending on how much impervious area (IA) is on a property. All stormwater revenue will be placed into a dedicated fund used only for Norristown's stormwater program, such as the operation, maintenance, and improvement of stormwater infrastructure which includes over 30 miles of stormwater pipes and 1,350 stormwater inlets.

### **Independent Operation**

While the Stormwater Authority members are appointed by the Municipal Council, the Norristown Municipal Stormwater Authority operates independently of the municipality. Learn more about the authority's operations by visiting the authority's website on [Norristown.org](http://Norristown.org)

## ***Planning Commission***

### **Meetings Times**

The Planning Commission meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the council chambers of the Norristown Municipal Building (235 E. Airy Street).

### **Membership** *(Ch. 70, Article XXX §70 - 1 of the Municipal Code)*

The planning commission consists of seven (7) residents of the Municipality, one of whom may be a member of the Municipal Council, appointed and confirmed by the Municipal Council of Norristown. All approvals and confirmations of the Council's appointments shall be by written resolution specifically identifying the initiation and termination of the terms of office of each member appointed to the commission.

**Length of Membership**      4 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Planning Commission is appointed to provide advice to the Municipal Council and the Zoning Hearing Board with respect to comprehensive land use planning and existing land use in Norristown. Commission responsibilities include:

- In the performance of its functions, enter upon any land to make examinations and surveys with the consent of the owner
- Make recommendations to governmental, civic and private agencies and individuals as to the effectiveness of the proposals of such organizations
- Make recommendations to Council concerning the adoption or amendment of an official map
- Prepare a comprehensive plan for the development of the township as set forth in the township Code and present it for the consideration to the Board of Supervisors
- Prepare and present to Council a building code and a housing code and make recommendations concerning proposed amendments thereto
- Prepare and present to Council zoning ordinances and make recommendations to proposed amendments
- Prepare, recommend and administer subdivision and land development regulations
- Present testimony before any board (i.e. Zoning Hearing Board)
- Promote public interest and understanding of the comprehensive plan
- Request from municipal departments such available information as relates to the work of the Planning Commission

## ***Recreation Committee***

### **Meeting times**

As needed (meeting times are set at the first meeting in January)

### **Membership** (*Ch. 66, Article XXX §66 - 3 of the Municipal Code*)

The length of the membership for the Recreation Committee is a five-year term. The committee is made of seven members. Members must be resident of the Municipality of Norristown,

**Length of Membership**      5 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Recreation Committee advises and makes recommendations to the Municipal Council on the formulation of community events, recreation programming, and fundraising opportunities for the Municipality of Norristown. Members may also volunteer in the organization and assistance of recreational events hosted by the Municipality.

## ***Zoning Hearing Board***

### **Meeting times**

The zoning hearing board meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the council chambers of the Norristown Municipal Building (235 E. Airy Street)

### **Membership** (*Ch. 320, Article XXX §320 - 350 & 351 of the Municipal Code*)

The zoning hearing board consists of five (5) residents of the Municipality appointed and confirmed by the Municipal Council of Norristown. All approvals and confirmations of the Council's appointments shall be by written resolution specifically identifying the initiation and termination of the terms of office of each member appointed to the board.

**Length of Membership**      5 Year Term

### **Responsibilities**

The Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) is an independent quasi-judicial body that hears appeals from the municipal zoning officer's determinations on zoning applications and renders decisions on whether to grant relief from the literal enforcement of a zoning ordinance by means of a variance. The ZHB also hears applications for special land uses as well as challenges to the substantive validity of a municipal zoning ordinance.

The ZHB may also appoint its own solicitor to assist in its deliberations, written decisions, and appeals. The municipal solicitor may not be the ZHB solicitor since the opinions and decisions of the ZHB may differ from the views of the council members.