

# Norristown News

Official Municipality of Norristown Newsletter- Fall 2020 issue

## 2021 Budget Season

Three public hearings were held in October on the then-preliminary 2021 operating budget. The projected shortfall is looking to be \$2.5 million in the proposed \$36.3 million operating budget for 2021. A hearing on the proposed budget was on Oct. 20.

The municipal budget accounts for all expenses related to the operations of the Norristown fire and police departments, administration, public works, employee salary, benefits and pension costs, paying down our debt service and all other operations of the municipality.

A number of recommendations in the proposed budget to close the shortfall include the cutting of expenses, using a portion of our fund balance, and raising property taxes. Municipal Council will ultimately be responsible for approving the budget and establishing the millage rate (taxing level) for 2021, currently advertised at an increase of 1 mill to 16 mills. Council is expected to vote on a final budget at their Nov. 17 work session meeting.

You can view the budget documents and video from the public hearings on our website at [norristown.org](http://norristown.org).



## Vote in the Nov. 3 General Election

Nov. 3 is the general election in which Norristown voters will be asked to vote for President of the United States, their U.S. Representative for the 4th Congressional District, to select their Pennsylvania State Senator and State Representative and a number of state officials including attorney general and state treasurer. Verify your voter registration and find your polling location at [votespa.com](http://votespa.com). Call the county's voter registration office for more information at 610-278-3280.

*(Cont'd on page 2)*

## Fall 2020 Newsletter: In this issue

Welcome to the new Norristown Newsletter!

This year was a critical point in realizing how we reach out to our residents, and how effective we are in putting out important information. The Fall 2020 newsletter is a first step to reaching out to everyone directly who may not be on social media, perusing our website, or reading the newspaper. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and the information we are providing to you.

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### **Municipal Council Fall/Winter 2020 Meetings**

Council approved their 2020 meeting calendar at the end of 2019. Here is a list of the remaining scheduled meetings for the year.\*

*\* Due to COVID-19, council meetings have been held virtually since April. Meeting access information is available the Friday before every meeting. Meeting information will be published in the newspaper, on our website, and our municipal social media pages.*

#### November

4- Council meeting, 7:30 p.m.  
17- Work session, 6:30 p.m.

#### December

1- Council meeting, 7:30 p.m.  
15- work session, 6:30 p.m.



**Mail/Ballot dropbox:**

**Montgomery County Airy St. Parking Lot**



Mail-in ballots **MUST** be filled out and placed in the accompanying secrecy ballot, and then put into the official mailing envelope. Ballots sent in the mail must be postmarked on/by Nov. 3 and received by the county by 5 p.m. on Nov. 6 to be counted. You may return your ballot, **AND YOUR BALLOT ONLY**, at the dropboxes. The drop boxes will be available for use from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Hours will expand daily from Oct. 31 to Nov. 3.

**Polling places for Nov. 3 General Election**



These are your voting locations, by precinct. Polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Verify your precinct/polling location at [votespa.com](http://votespa.com).

- Precinct 1-1: United Church of Christ, 1003 W. Marshall St.**
- Precincts 1-2, 1-3, 2-1: Stewart MS, 1315 W. Marshall St.**
- Precincts 2-2, 2-3, 3-2: Gotwals Elem. School, 1 E. Oak St.**
- Precincts 3-1, 3-3: Eisenhower Middle School, 1601 Markley St.**
- Precinct 4-1: Holy Savior Club, 436 E. Main St.**
- Precinct 4-2: MontCo Human Services, 1430 DeKalb St.**
- Precinct 4-3: Hancock Elementary School, 1520 Arch St.**

***A 'Royal' welcome to a new business, a 'Baer' of a project makes head way***

Baltimore-based convenience store Royal Farms opened its newest store in Norristown at 1820 Markley St. on Oct. 8. The Norristown store will employ up to 50 employees and offer full-service fueling options and, of course, their world famous fried chicken. Municipal council approved a liquor license transfer to the store for the selling of beer and wine. The opening of the store marks the third in Montgomery County, and one of over 230 stores operating in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia and Maryland.



A mixed-use development for the Baer Building (118-120 E. Main St.) was given conditional use approval by council to allow for a brew pub/sports bar, yoga studio, The eSpot (an eGaming venue), Willis Brothers BBQ, an outdoor bar, a bike shop and 15 apartments. Zoning approval is needed for a proposed car detailing shop. There are still a few more steps to be taken before the full project comes to fruition, sometime in 2021. Norristown-based Mill Properties, LLC. is the owner of the property and is in charge of its redevelopment.



## A message from Council President Derrick Perry

Municipal Council is committed to working with the community to ensure we are effectively serving our residents, which includes making progressive and tough decisions like the sale of our sewer system. The selling of our sewer system to Aqua PA will be a benefit as we boost our tax base with new businesses and development, and to slow the reliance on tax increases to pay for updating our facilities and community. The approximately \$58 million sale proceeds coming to Norristown will help us leverage tax increases as we work to move our community to the town “where you belong.” It is important to keep Norristown moving forward in this amazing area of the Philadelphia suburbs to satisfy our lifelong residents and business owners, while enticing new residents to call Norristown home.

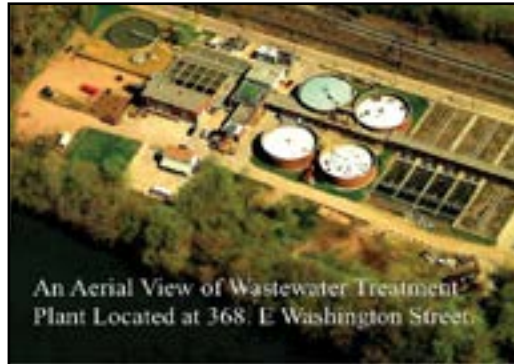


# The sale of the sewer system to Aqua Pennsylvania

- On June 16, Municipal Council approved by a 5-2 vote the sale of the sewer system (Norristown Municipal Waste Authority) to Aqua Pennsylvania Wastewater, Inc. for \$82 million.
- The municipality is expected to receive approximately \$58 million in proceeds when the sale closes.
- The system is aged with much of its infrastructure in need of repair/improvement.
- Two bidders estimate necessary improvement needed at at least \$20 to \$30 million.
- There is no current, long-term capital improvement plan beyond \$9 million improvement at the sewerplant.
- Aqua has pledged \$1 million per year in pipes in the ground for the next 10 years, making the conveyance system much more reliable.
- These improvements are necessary to support municipal economic development for the county’s Justice Center development project, the re-development of 68 acres of the State Hospital property, riverfront redevelopment and other planned development on Main Street and throughout Norristown.
- Proceeds from the sale will be leveraged to the benefit of taxpayers to offset the burden on taxpayers for years to come.
- A binding trust to offset tax increase in future years by utilizing interest from the trust to fill revenue shortages instead of only raising taxes; a binding trust to offset future sewer rate increases on residents.
- Leverage funds to reduce fire and police pension debt (annually \$2.5 million per year – paid by taxpayers).
- Matching funds for grant to build a Norristown-owned firehouse and reduce capital and operating costs paid for by taxpayers.
- Matching funds for a grant to develop a new recreation complex to improve the quality of life for Norristown residents.

## *Other ideas under consideration*

- Potential decrease in the EIT.
- Economic development initiatives (strategic property acquisition and economic development incentives).
- Fire department consolidation (from four leased buildings to one, plus build a new firehouse).
- Pay down the municipality’s long-term debt.
- Contribute to unfunded pension liability.
- Create and endow a scholarship program for Norristown resident high school students.



In 2021, council will hold a number of town hall meetings to gather feedback from residents about the use of the sale proceeds. The municipality will not receive the funds until the sale is closed.

More information at [www.norristown.org](http://www.norristown.org)

## *What are the facts?*

**FACT:** Selling of the sewer authority WILL NOT lose \$1 million in annual revenue to the municipality. The NMWA does not generate revenue for the municipality’s budget.

**FACT:** Current employees of the NMWA authority will be protected in their jobs, under the collective bargaining agreement, with employment with Aqua PA.

**FACT:** Offsetting rising expenses to the municipal budget with sale proceeds will be beneficial to taxpayers by not being solely dependent on their tax dollars to cover those costs.

**Municipality of  
Norristown**

235 E. Airy St.  
Norristown, Pa. 19401  
610-270-8080  
www.norristown.org

Administration: 610-270-0421

Code enforcement: 610-270-0441

Human resrouces: 610-270-3673

Finance/taxes: 610-270-0426

Fire (non-emergency): 610-635-4455

Planning: 610-270-0451

Police: 610-270-0911

Public Works: 610-270-0437



Mailing information here

## Municipal Hall Renovation



On the verge of a [\\$13 million renovation to the almost 50-year-old Municipal Hall](#), our operations will start to move to a temporary location at Logan Commerce Center (Markley Street and Johnson Highway) at the start of 2021. The Norristown Police Department will remain at the Municipal Hall building during the renovation, Upon completion in 2022, Municipal Hall will have 9,000 more square feet added to provide more accessibility to our various municipal departments. Parking will also be expanded in the back parking lot.

## Municipality of Norristown Capital Improvement Plan

### 2021-2025

The municipality's second Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is projected to cost over \$29 million and builds off the work accomplished in the preceding CIP. Improvements to crosswalks and roadways, the building of a new fire department and continued renovations to the Recreation Center — a property acquisition funded in the first CIP — are some of the projects on the list. There are projects and items not incorporated into the general operating budget. Funds for the second CIP are forecasted to come from grants, bonds and other funding streams. Municipal Council approved the 2021-25 CIP on Sept. 15. The full plan can be viewed right from the homepage of our website at [norristown.org](http://norristown.org).

### What has been approved for CIP 2021-2025?

#### Public Works

Milling/paving/ADA ramps on two streets; Stormwater inlet repairs; Construction of a new public works building; Curb and sidewalk replacement. Overall investment in Public Works: \$7 million

#### Parks & Rec

Continued renovation of the Recreation Center; Upgrades to Riverfront Park; Refurbish Ackley and Elmwood Park pavilions; Basketball courts for Simmons Park. Overall investment to Parks & Rec: \$2.5 million