

# Council of the City of York, Pennsylvania

Sandie Walker, President of Council  
Edquina Washington, Vice President of Council  
Lou Rivera, Member of Council  
Betsy Buckingham, Member of Council  
Dr. Felicia O. A. Dennis, Member of Council

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## MINUTES December 5, 2023 6:00 p.m.

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2023 MEETINGS: Click [here](#) to view 2023 Council Meetings Dates

CALL TO ORDER: President Walker called the November 21, 2023, meeting to order at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 101 S. George St., York, PA, with the following members present: Felicia Dennis, Betsy Buckingham, Lou Rivera, Edquina Washington, Vice President, and Sandie Walker, President, with President Walker presiding.

Members of the Administration in attendance included: Michael Helfrich, Mayor; Kim Robertson, Business Administrator; Joe Jefcoat, Treasurer; Cpt. Dan Aikey, Police Department; Gere Lavelle, Chief Accountant; Scott Miller, Chief of Staff; and Brett Flower, Assistant Solicitor.

Members of Council staff in attendance: Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk.

### I. Public Comment:

Franklin Williams, resident, said he lives in a well-lit area so there is no real concern with him taking his garbage out. He said other residents might not be so lucky. He said the city's trash ordinance needs to be changed to accommodate for daylight savings time. He said he has suggested this several times over the years. He then spoke about residents complaining about bumps, holes, and speeding on Mason Ave. The question was asked if Council would consider putting in a speed bump. Several weeks ago, he said they got a brand-new alley and it's wonderful, smooth, and appreciated. He's hoping the smooth new surface doesn't create a speeding problem.

Marie Rohleder, resident, said we need better lighting so that pedestrians can be seen better at night. She said she couldn't see a pedestrian until she was right up on him. She said the lighting in the City Hall parking lot is bad and safety should be a concern.

Samantha Dorm, resident, said she volunteers at Lebanon Cemetery, which is a historically black cemetery located in North York, but is the final resting place for individuals who primarily lived in the City of York. She gave a brief history of the cemetery. She announced that on December 16<sup>th</sup> veterans will be honored with Wreaths Across America where they will lay wreaths for our fallen soldiers. She presented Council with a book about Lebanon Cemetery and York's black history, and encouraged all to read it because we have residents who have accomplished great things. She invited residents to visit the Friends of Lebanon Cemetery website for more information. (Click [here](#) to visit website)

There being no further comment, President Walker adjourned the public comment session at 6:16 pm and immediately convened in legislative session.

- II. Called Legislative Meeting to Order 6:16 p.m.
- III. Roll Call
- IV. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- V. Moment of Silence was observed.
- VI. Action on previous meeting Minutes of [November 21, 2023](#). Council dispensed with the reading of the minutes and unanimously approved them as written.
- VII. Presentations, Awards and Announcements: None
- VIII. Meeting(s) Scheduled:
  - ▶ **Legislative Meeting:** The next legislative meeting of Council will be held on Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agenda items are due by 12 noon on December 13<sup>th</sup>.
  - ▶ **Council Committee Meeting:** No committee meeting is scheduled for December.
- IX. Status of Prior Committee Referrals: No reports.
- X. Legislative Agenda: (Order of Business – Action on Subdivision/Land Development & HARB Resolutions; Final Passage of Bills/Resolutions; New Business.)

**Final Passage of Bills / Resolutions:** None

1. Final Passage of Bill No. 52, Ordinance No. 52 - A Bill Amending the FY2023 Budget. ([View](#)) (ARPA - ~~\$3,500,000.00~~ **\$4,000,000.00** for Affordable Housing & Homeowner Relief programs)  
Introduced by: Sandie Walker  
Originator: Council (Walker)/Economic & Community Development/Finance  
Note: Bill No. 52 was tabled at Council's 11/21/23 meeting to amend the bill to include housing for veterans in the amount of \$500,000.00.

Final Passage of Bill No. 52, Ordinance No. 52, Session 2023, A Bill amending the FY2023 Budget in the amount of \$4,000,000 from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for affordable housing and homeowner relief programs, and veterans' housing support and services, which was introduced by Walker at the November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of Council, read by short title, and tabled, came up for final passage.

**Motion to remove from table.** A motion was made by Rivera, seconded by Washington, to remove Bill No. 52 from the table for discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Lavelle Howell, Founder of Prodigy Spectrum, a personal care home for veterans who are homeless or displaced, said they are located in York City at 656 Salem Ave. She said they are the official contractor with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and they have been approved for 20 veterans. She said she is looking for financial support to help their veterans with housing. She said they want to be a one stop shop to provide emergency shelter and time for vets to find proper housing, they offer transportation, activities, and more, but veterans still need more, and she'd like to be able to provide services to them. Ms. Howell said she and her husband provided

the start-up money for their business and now they are preparing to open a 5,000 sq. ft. facility at 626 W. Market St. She said if they could secure funding for emergency shelter, she would be able to purchase properties offering one-bedroom apartments.

Franklin Williams, resident, said this is one of the largest appropriations of ARPA funds and is more than what was appropriated to non-profit organizations. He said investors have priced properties out of financial reach of many working city residents. He said there is a lack of detail, but he understands it will be executed appropriately.

Samantha Dorm, resident, commended Council, and the Administration on movement of ARPA funding. She said we have a veterans' program sponsored by Crispus Attucks and there is money through the state to train veterans. She added that housing will and can be complemented through state programs and funding because we have a problem here in York.

Councilwoman Buckingham said any programs that go through ARPA funds are required to meet the compliance rules so these programs will definitely meet the standards.

President Walker invited residents to visit the city's website and see the [ARPA dashboard](#) which details programs, and funding. She said there is a major issue of homeless veterans in the City of York, so it made sense to authorize this funding.

Mayor Helfrich said we are in a housing crisis right now, so this funding is about 10% of the ARPA budget. Lancaster has allocated a much larger percentage, about 25%, just in housing. So, we are hoping this investment will spur over 100 new units in the city, which will go through an RFP process with oversight.

President Walker said she requested this Bill be tabled because she wanted to add \$500,000 in funding for veterans' housing and support services.

There being no further discussion, Bill No. 52, Ordinance No. 52, as amended, PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker - 5; Nays - 0.

2. Final Passage of Bill No. 53, Ordinance No. 53 - A Bill  
Amending the FY2023 Budget. ([View](#)) (ARPA - \$550,000.00 for a Blighted Property Reduction Program)  
Introduced by: Edquina Washington  
Originator: Economic & Community Development/Redevelopment Authority  
Note: Bill No. 53 was tabled at Council's 11/21/23 meeting as there were questions on account numbers and the blight process.

Final Passage of Bill No. 53, Ordinance No. 53, Session 2023, A Bill amending the FY2023 Budget to appropriate \$550,000.00 for ARPA funds for a blighted property reduction program, which was introduced by Washington at the November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of Council, read by short title, and tabled, came up for final passage.

**Motion to remove from table.** A motion was made by Buckingham, seconded by Dennis, to remove Bill No. 53 from the table for discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

President Walker said she requested this Bill be tabled because she had questions about the ARPA Projects account number, which has since been corrected.

There being no further discussion, Bill No. 53, Ordinance No. 53, as amended, PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker - 5; Nays - 0.

3. Final Passage of Bill No. 55, Ordinance No. 54 - A Bill Approving and adopting the FY2024 City of York Budget. ([View](#)) ([View Proposed Budget](#))  
Introduced by: Betsy Buckingham  
Originator: Mayor / Business Administration

Final Passage of Bill No. 55, Ordinance No. 54, Session 2023, A Bill approving and adopting the FY204 City of York Budget, which was introduced by Buckingham, at the November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of Council and read by short title, came up for final passage. On motion of Buckingham, seconded by Dennis, Bill No. 55 came up for discussion.

Mayor Helfrich responded to a letter provided to Council regarding the use of WWTP funds in the 2024 budget as follows:

“Good afternoon, Council President Walker, and Council members.

Thank you for this opportunity to address any questions regarding our strategy and use of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Sale proceeds and dividends.

I am happy to reaffirm the strategy that the City Administration has been following since City Council voted to approve the sale of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sewer Collection System. You were part of that vote and may recall we were facing a 48% tax increase and a 42% sewer fee increase at that time. It was agreed that we would use proceeds from the sale of the plant to fill that deficit and avoid tax and fee increases. It was also discussed at that time that we could put off tax increases in future years with the proceeds of the plant by using investment dividends and some of the principal as necessary. There was never any illusion that the dividends from investment would solely solve the budget gaps of the City, only that dividends would help slow the rate of use of the principal needed.

Without any significant change in the revenues to the City by raising taxes, and annual increases in all expenses due to inflation and market factors, the annual budget continues to see the expected annual revenue gap. By investing the proceeds in a CRIM dividend-producing investment we were able to create additional revenue for the City of \$9 million in 2023 and conservatively anticipate an additional \$7.6 million in 2024. Thus, we were able to reduce the amount of principal required to fill the budget gap in the 2024 proposed budget to \$4 million. This is a \$13.3 million decrease from the \$17.3 million that was budgeted in 2023. To clarify what is included in the 2024 Proposed Budget, the total of \$20.6 million of Treatment Plant Sale Funds is a combination of the \$16.6 million in investment earnings from 2023 and 2024 and only \$4 million from the principal. These funds will be used in 2024 to pay \$5.3 million in general debt service payments (paying down debts as agreed upon), \$10.3 million in MMO pension payments, and the remaining \$5 million will go towards the total of \$12.7 million in expected health insurance expenses for 2024. So, in fact, this budget has eliminated the \$5.3 million-dollar annual debt service payment that was previously being paid out of tax revenue in the General Fund.

The plan from the very beginning was to invest the proceeds from the plant sale and draw them down for standard expense purposes, such as the pension and health benefit expenses. From the beginning it was well-understood that these proceeds would allow the City to remain tax-increase-free for approximately 10 to 20 years. At the current rate of drawdown and accounting for continued unavoidable inflation of the budget expenses we expect approximately 15 years of financial stability.

This strategy was discussed and understood at the time of the sale by Jason Sabol, and I believe all involved. We have not deviated from this strategy. And the Administration continues to do

everything reasonable to keep costs as low as possible while providing the expected services to the community and needed improvements to our infrastructure.

Please let me know if Council or others have any further questions.

Submitted by: Michael Helfrich, Mayor”

President Walker thanked the mayor for the response, and said it answers the concerns raised.

Mayor Helfrich then read his State of the City Address, accomplishments, and 2024 budget highlights, programs, and projects.

President Walker said she is very pleased with this year’s budget process, and she thanked the Mayor, the Administration, and Council for their work.

There being no further discussion, Bill No. 55, Ordinance No. 54, PASSED by the following vote: Yeas: Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker - 5; Nays - 0.

4. Final Passage of Bill No. 56, Ordinance No. 55 - A Bill  
Approving and adopting the FY2024 Tax rate. ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Betsy Buckingham  
Originator: Mayor / Business Administration

Final Passage of Bill No. 56, Ordinance No. 55, Session 2023, A Bill approving and adopting the FY2024 tax rate, which was introduced by Buckingham at the November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of Council and read by short title, came up for final passage. There being no discussion, Bill No. 56, Ordinance No. 55, PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker - 5; Nays - 0

### Introduction of Bills

5. Introduction of Bill No. (PULLED) - A Bill  
Amending Article 127 “City Treasurer” and Article 129 “City Controller” of the Codified Ordinances. ([View](#)) (To establish bond requirements)  
Introduced by: Lou Rivera  
Originator: Council / City Clerk
6. Introduction of Bill No. 57 - A Bill  
Amending Article 545 “Public/Private Property Towing” of the Codified Ordinances. ([View](#))  
(To amend fees and update definitions)  
Introduced by: Lou Rivera  
Originator: Council

Introduction of Bill No. 57, Session 2023, A Bill amending Article 545 “Public/Private Property Towing” of the Codified Ordinance to amend fees and update definitions, was introduced by Rivera, read by short title, and deferred to 12/19/23 meeting.

### New Business - Items for Consideration of Consent Agenda

**Motion to consider consent agenda.** A motion was made by Rivera, seconded by Dennis, to consider agenda items 7-13 as a consent agenda. President Walker said since there was no committee agenda, she would prefer to discuss each item. The motion passed by the following vote: Yeas - Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington - 4; Nay - Walker - 1.

President Walker asked if any member of Council wishes to pull any items from the consent agenda. Vice President Washington requested to pull agenda items 10 and 13.

President Walker asked if there was any Council, Administration, or public comment on consent agenda items. There was no discussion.

**Motion to approve consent agenda items.** A motion was made by Dennis, seconded by Buckingham, to approve consent agendas 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12. The motion to approve PASSED by the following vote: Yeas – Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker – 5; Nays – 0.

7. Resolution No. 112 - A Resolution  
Accepting the recommendations of HARB. ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Felicia Dennis  
Originator: HARB

Resolution No. 112, Session 2023, A Resolution accepting the recommendations of HARB in issuing a certificate of appropriateness for work to be covered in the application filed for work to be done at 48 E. Market St., was approved unanimously by consent agenda.

8. Resolution No. 113 - A Resolution  
Authorizing submission of a proposal for grant funds. ([View](#)) (\$1,000,000 – Statewide Local Share Assessment Grant for paving, sidewalk/curb repair, streetlights, tree removal, Thackston Park playground equipment)  
Introduced by: Felicia Dennis  
Originator: Public Works

Resolution No. 113, Session 2023, A Resolution authorizing a submission of a proposal for Statewide Local Share Assessment Grant funding in the amount of \$1,000,000.00 for paving, sidewalk/curb repair, streetlights, tree removal, and installation of playground equipment at Thackston Park, was approved unanimously by consent agenda.

9. Resolution No. 114 - A Resolution  
Authorizing an agreement with the County of York. ([View](#)) (\$111,171.00 – Opioid Settlement)  
Introduced by: Edquina Washington  
Originator: Economic & Community Development / Health

Resolution No. 114, Session 2023, A Resolution authorizing an agreement with the County of York in the amount of \$111,171.00 from County Opioid Settlement Funds to coordinate the overdose fatality review team for the period of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024, was approved unanimously by consent agenda.

10. Resolution No. 115 - A Resolution  
Approving probationary police officers. ([View](#)) (T. York, H. Geare, L. Lopez, I. Carrion-Cruz, R. Hackney, Jr.)  
Introduced by: Edquina Washington  
Originator: Mayor / Police

Resolution No. 115, Session 2023, A Resolution approving the appointment of the following as Probationary Police Officers: Terry York, Heather Geare, Luis Lopez, Brandon Arnold, Israel Carrion-Cruz, and Ricky Hackney Jr., was introduced by Washington, read at length, motion of Washington, seconded by Buckingham, Resolution No. 115 PASSED by the following vote: Yeas – Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker – 5; Nays – 0.

11. Resolution No. 116 - A Resolution Approving year 2023 Minimum Municipal Obligations (MMO's) ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Betsy Buckingham  
Originator: Business Administration

Resolution No. 116, Session 2023, A Resolution approving the year 2023 minimum municipal obligations for the Firefighter's Pension Fund in the amount of \$4,728,120, the Police Pension Fund in the amount of \$4,243,785, and the Officers & Employees Retirement Fund \$1,804,802, was approved unanimously by consent agenda.

12. Resolution No. 117 - A Resolution Authorizing a salary increase for the Director of Economic & Community Development ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Besty Buckingham  
Originator: Mayor

Resolution No. 117, Session 2023, A Resolution establishing the salary of Nona Watson, Director of Economic & Community Development at \$105,000.00 effective 1/1/2024, was approved unanimously by consent agenda.

13. Resolution No. 118 - A Resolution Adopting policy on Warrantless Arrests. ([View](#))  
Introduced by: Edquina Washington  
Originator: Police

Motion to read by short title. A motion was made by Washington, seconded by Dennis, to read Resolution No. 118 by short title. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 118, Session 2023, A Resolution adopting a policy on warrantless arrests was introduced by Washington, read by short title, and on motion of Washington, seconded by Dennis, Resolution No. 118 came up for discussion.

Vice President Washington asked what happens if an officer doesn't have a badge or uniform when making a warrantless arrest.

Capt. Dan Aikey said they would follow through with the arrest or call for a uniformed officer. He said they have been accredited since 2014 and there are 125 standards that police departments are to follow. He said they will tell us the standard but won't tell us how to write the standard. He said under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Class City Charter we are authorized to make these arrests, but the auditors wanted us to inscribe it as a policy and have it approved by Council.

Elsbeth Bupp, resident, asked under what conditions the police performed warrantless arrests prior to this policy.

Capt. Aikey said warrantless arrests were made in accordance with Title 11, which authorizes us to do warrantless arrests. He explained that the auditors were confused by the authority, so we submitted the policy to Council for formal adoption.

There being no further discussion, Resolution No. 118 PASSED by the following vote: Yeas - Dennis, Buckingham, Rivera, Washington, Walker - 5; Nays - 0.

- XI. Requests for Future Meetings: None  
XII. Council Comment

Councilwoman Buckingham said last year she participated in the wreath laying ceremony (Wreaths Across America) at Lebanon Cemetery. She said our community needs to understand that this is not just a local event. People were there from Washington, D.C., and other parts of the country to participate in this event. She encouraged residents and visitors to visit Lebanon Cemetery.

President Walker said she is thankful for the Friends of Lebanon Cemetery and those who serve on the non-profit board for the cemetery.

Councilman Rivera recognized Council-Elect Elsbeth Bupp who was in the audience.

XIII. Administration Comment

Mayor Helfrich said he visited Vision Solutions, AR, 96 S. George St., which is an augmented reality firm creating an experience for visitors of the cemetery to read information markers located throughout the cemetery for visitors to read.


Mayor Helfrich then answered the comment made during public comment about streetlights. He said the light in the parking lot was installed by the city and is motion detected to save money, but he will have the settings checked to make sure they are working properly.

Mayor Helfrich then acknowledged the loss of resident Harry O. Colon, a leader in our community and a leader in the hip-hop community. He said had known him to be someone who took on anything to uplift and make his neighborhood better. He said his office will issue a proclamation to honor his life.

XIV. Adjournment: The next legislative meeting of City Council is scheduled for Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers. There being no further business, the December 5, 2023 meeting of Council adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

XV. Resumption of Public Comment Period (at the discretion of the presiding officer): None

  
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Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk

  
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Sandie Walker, President of Council