

Council of the City of York, Pennsylvania

Edquina Washington, President of Council
Betsy Buckingham, Vice President of Council
Dr. Felicia O. A. Dennis, Member of Council
Elizabeth Bupp, Member of Council
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MINUTES January 7, 2025 6:00 p.m.

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FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/CityofYorkPA/>

YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/c/WhiteRoseCommunityTV>.

2025 MEETINGS: Click [here](#) to view 2025 Council Meetings Dates

CALL TO ORDER: President Washington called the January 7, 2025, meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, 101 S. George St., York, PA, with the following members present: Elizabeth Bupp, Teresa Johnescu, Betsy Buckingham, Vice President, and Edquina Washington, President with President Washington presiding. Councilwoman Felicia Dennis teleconferenced into the meeting.

Members of the Administration included: Kim Robertson, Business Administrator; India Banks, Interim Director of Public Works; and Assistant Solicitor Brett Flower.

Council Staff in attendance included: Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk.

I. Public Comment:

Tommy Smith, resident, said he moved here from Texas last year. He said he loves York, PA, and he has a multi-racial family. He said everyone is very friendly.

Donald Neukam, Goods Disposal Service, stated that he was the low bidder in trash recycling program and just wanted to introduce himself and answer any questions Council might have about the contract. Council had no questions.

There being no further discussion, the public comment period adjourned at 6:03 P.M.

II. Called Legislative Meeting to Order: 6:03 p.m.

III. Roll Call

IV. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

V. Moment of Silence was observed.

VI. Action on previous meeting Minutes of [December 17, 2024](#). Council dispensed with the reading of the minutes and unanimously approved them as written.

VII. Presentations, Awards and Announcements

►Proclamation: Proclaiming January 2025 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month in the City of York, PA. (Click [here](#) view Proclamation) – Accepted by Ashlyn Drummond, YWCA.

President Washington read the proclamation into the record.

Ashlyn Drummond, YSCA York, thanked Council for the proclamation. She outlined the services they provide to victims of human trafficking and support initiatives.

President Washington thanked the YWCA York for their selfless work.

►Presentation: Todd Fogdall, President & CEO, Appell Center for the Performing Arts, to give a brief update on the impact of the Appell Center throughout York City and the community. (Click [here](#) to view presentation)

President Washington thanked Mr. Fogdall for the presentation for their over \$600,000 in payments in lieu taxes.

VIII. Meeting(s) Scheduled:

► **Legislative Meeting:** The next legislative meeting of Council will be held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agenda items are due by 12 noon on January 15th.

► **Council Committee Meeting:** Scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agenda items are due by 12 noon on January 22nd.

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)

Subdivision/Land Development/HARB: None

Final Passage of Bills/Resolutions: None

New Business – Introduction of Bills

1. Introduction of Bill No. 1 - A Bill Amending the FY2025 Budget. ([View](#)) (For Parks & Recs by appropriating additional revenue and expenditures for maintenance, repairs, and improvements to the city's war monuments and sculptures - \$10,097.72)
Introduced by: Felicia Dennis
Originator: Public Works / Parks & Recreation

Introduction of Bill No. 1, Session 2025, A Bill amending the 2025 Budget in the amount of \$10,097.72 for maintenance, repairs and improvements to the city's war monuments and sculptures was introduced by Dennis, read by short title, and deferred to the January 21 meeting of Council.

New Business

2. Resolution No. 1 - A Resolution Approving Billing Rates for 2025. ([View](#)) (For engineering services provided by C.S. Davidson and TRG)
Introduced by: Felicia Dennis
Originator: Public Works

Motion to introduce by short title. M motion was made by Dennis, seconded by Buckingham, to introduce Resolution No. 1 by short title only. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 1, Session 2025, A Resolution approving billing rates for 2025 for C.S. Davidson and Transportation Resource Group (TRG), was introduced by Dennis, read by short title, and with there being no discussion, on motion of Dennis, seconded by Buckingham, Resolution No. 1 passed by the following vote: Yeas – Bupp, Johnescu, Dennis, Buckingham, Washington – 5; Nays – 0.

3. Resolution No. 2 - A Resolution Closing out Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Project #BRC-TAG-27-261. ([View](#)) (Relating to the Parks Master Plan)
Introduced by: Felicia Dennis
Originator: Public Works / Recreation and Parks

Motion to read by short title: A motion was made by Johnescu, seconded Buckingham, to read Resolution No. 2 by short title only. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 2, Session 2025, A Resolution closing out Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Project #BRC-TAG-27-261 relating to the Parks Master Plan, was introduced by Dennis, read by short title, and with there being no discussion, on motion of Dennis, seconded by Johnescu, Resolution No. 2 passed by the following vote: Yeas – Bupp, Johnescu, Dennis, Buckingham, Washington – 5; Nays – 0.

4. Resolution No. 3 - A Resolution Overriding the Mayor's veto of Bill No. 47, Ordinance No. 47 of 2024. ([View](#)) (Establishing Article 156 "Welcoming and Access to Immigrants and Refugees" of the Codified Ordinances.)
Introduced by: Edquina Washington
Originator: Council / Washington

Resolution No. 3, Session 2025, A Resolution overriding the mayor's veto of Bill No. 47 of 2024, a bill establishing Article 156 "Welcoming and Access to Immigrants and Refugees" of the Codified Ordinances, was introduced by Washington, read at length, and on motion of Washington, seconded by Buckingham, the resolution came up for discussion.

Councilwoman Johnescu the following statement:

"If the veto of this legislation is upheld it does not diminish our credentials as a Welcoming City, established under an Executive Order in 2017. We are already living these principals. To uphold this veto at this time is not anti-immigrant. CASA's attorney assures us that there is no risk. The City Solicitor advises us otherwise, and I believe we should heed that advice. They want municipalities to adopt their ordinance. The City Solicitor advises us otherwise, and I believe we should heed that advice.

The loss of Federal funding is not an acceptable tradeoff in signing off on this legislation. We, likewise, cannot afford the cost of lengthy litigation to claw back that money. All of York will

suffer. Not once have we discussed what the loss of that funding would look like. There is no plan for the possible loss of that funding.

The Dispatch, in its article yesterday, oversimplified its contextual analysis of the federal funding versus the size of the City Budget, giving the impression that the federal funding at stake is not a big deal. I invite Business Administrator Robertson to elaborate or correct me. A lion share of the city budget expenditures goes to employee wages and benefits and city retiree pension and benefits. The balance must cover all other operational expenses of maintaining the city. There is little enough for the provision of services to our city's most vulnerable. In terms of revenue, 8 million in returns from the WWTP principal allowed for no increase in taxes. Property taxes and other taxes and fees represent about 33 million of revenue. The balance of city revenue, about 29 million is derived from other sources including, federal, state, and various other grants. The city relies on more than 2 million in federal grants.

Per Mayor Helfrich-York City's funding from HUD alone is about \$2 million annually. We don't know how other federal funds will be affected, funds that pay for additional police officers, firefighters, public works, etc. The HUD funds are used to help build and maintain affordable housing, for first-time homebuyer's grants, for low-income home improvement projects, for tearing down blighted properties, for helping the homeless, for career training, GED classes, and even fund CASA.

So, a loss of these funds will increase human suffering as these essential services, caring for our most vulnerable residents, will be reduced? Do we simply ask city taxpayers to make up the amount? Can our homeowners, already disproportionately burdened with the costs of running the city, bear the additional burden for the loss of the funding of these essential services? Do we use the WWTP money to make up the loss? The City is running a year-on-year deficit. City taxpayers are cushioned by the return on investment of the Wastewater Treatment Plant money. However, those robust returns may shrink as economists are predicting troubled markets in 2025. Do we dip into that principal further eroding the cushion, pushing us toward a fiscal cliff sooner than the ten years anticipated?

York cannot afford 'nobility.' I am confident that York City will continue to honor the Executive Order in place. I am aware of my responsibility as a Council Member to protect all of York's residents. I uphold the Mayor's veto of the Trust Act at this time."

- Submitted by Teresa Johnescu

Councilwoman Bupp said she will uphold this veto for the same reasons she stated when it was introduced. She said Captain Lentz will accept emails for complaints and anonymous tips can be made through the city's website. She said Capt. Lentz said they want to help. She said Capt. Lentz said they are committed to serving every human being in our community. She invited residents to visit www.yorkcitypolice.com to find various resources and submit anonymous tips. She said she also invites members of the community to contact her as well.

President Washington said she remains steadfast on her decision to approve this legislation and stands firmly on her previously made comments at the [December 17, 2024](#), meeting.

Tommy Smith, resident, said he knows what the illegal immigration problem is. He said where he lived in Texas, their crime rate went up significantly. He asked what happens if something happens to one of your children. He said Donald Trump will pull all funding for any cities harboring immigrants once he's president. He said we'll end up taking on this burden. He said the constitution states that you can only be here if you are a legal citizen. He said the city does not need this because this is now a place that people want to move to. He asked how will you respond to a victim when you tell them you voted to support this legislation.

Scott Smith, resident, asked what Plan B is if this Bill passes. He asked if this means we'll be taking on 10,000 illegal immigrants. There is a huge difference between 100 and 10,000. He said he moved here for a safe place to live for his family. He said he worries about his daughters and their safety. He said maybe we should work on cutting down the time for immigrants to become legal citizens, but he doesn't feel this is the right way to go. He said the veto should stand because he feels it's the best thing for our community.

Manuel Gomez, resident, said we have a member of Council brow beating us about deficits and he feels it's a red herring at best and that there is a scapegoating of communities. He said the mayor is behaving more like a politician when it comes to this legislation. He said the law of the land protects Council from the Federal government. He said courts have already ruled on cases of coercion. He said the law of the land is that you cannot be compelled so he wants to know the real reason for the veto and for upholding the veto and he doesn't want to hear about this being because of fiscal reasons. He suggest that this to go committee. He said Federal funding is not a noose, its strings attached. There is more to the constitution than those sound bites. He asked what's the real reason for opposing this legislation? He said the ordinance itself is fatally flawed because the action requirement fell on the mayor's office. Also, he said we need to determine what the philosophical reasons are for the pushback.

Lester Abbott, resident, said he has been a city resident for 35 years. He said the new Federal administration coming in this month said HUD funding is going to get reduced anyway, so trying to protect it by not passing this Bill doesn't matter. He said he knows many immigrant families that provide the city with good service. He said there are bad apples, and we'll weed them out. He said there are other citizens committing crimes and he doesn't feel it's fair to place this on all illegal immigrants. We need to decide who York City is.

Crystal Perry, resident, said the most common denominator for victims of human trafficking are people of color and white men are the highest rate of race exploiting these individuals. Our country does not make it easy for illegal immigrants. She discussed the types of victims she works with and said most of her victims are victimized by a family member. This is not an easy process and to become legal is backlogged and physicals are over \$600.

Mauricio Tobon, resident and business owner, said he was the victim of a crime; his house was shot up. He said he took information to the police department about the shooting and nothing has happened. He said the trust is not there. He asked where the information is coming from that illegal immigrants will increase crime. Statistics show that current residents increase the crime rate.

City Clerk Thompson shared information received from Police Commissioner Muldrow in an email sent to Council dated January 7, 2025, in which he asked that the information be shared with the public. In the commissioner's email, he stated, in brief that, "As of January 7, 2024, Internal Affairs (IA) has been unable to corroborate any of the incidents that were presented to Council on [December 17, 2024](#). IA has stressed to CASA that for these incidents to be properly investigated, the more detail regarding the people, dates and locations that they can provide, the better. I will update command as when these meetings are set."

Delores Miniya, resident, said she commented at the last meeting, and she had a meeting today with one of the victims, the police department, and the Human Relations Commission, and she said it was not the York City Police Department involved in the incident, and they were not informed of what happened but said they would investigate. She then discussed an incident where seven police officers entered a home where a gentleman was taking a shower, and they asked him to come downstairs and he wasn't dressed. She apologized for not having the correct information by implying these were York City police officers. She said we need to be sure that information we provide is correct.

Councilwoman Bupp thanked Ms. Miniya for explaining and she agreed that there is misinformation and there is confusion as to what ICE, the local government and our local police officers can do. There are criminal statutes on the books and this legislation does not negate any of these and is basically for administrative purposes. She said we need to come together and build a coalition where people have someone to call when the don't feel comfortable calling the police and we have to advertise that contact information.

There being no further discussion, Resolution No. 3 FAILED by the following vote: Yeas - Dennis, Buckingham, Washington - 3; Nays - Bupp, Johnescu - 2. As four votes are needed to override the mayor's veto, and this resolution did not meet that 2/3 approval requirement, the override failed, and the mayor's veto stands.

- XI. Council Comment: None
- XII. Administration Comment: None
- XIII. Adjournment: The next meeting of City Council is scheduled for January 21, 2025 at 6PM in City Council Chambers. There being no further business, the January 7, 2025 meeting of Council adjourned at 7:03 p.m.
- XIV. Resumption of Public Comment Period (at the discretion of the presiding officer): None



Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk



Edquina Washington, President of Council