

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 December 3, 2024 6:00 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER: President Washington called the December 3, 2024, meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, 101 S. George St., York, PA, with the following members present: Elizabeth Bupp, Betsy Buckingham, Vice President, and Edquina Washington, President with President Washington presiding. Councilwoman Teresa Johnescu telephoned in for the meeting.

Members of the Administration included: Mayor Michael Helfrich; Kim Robertson, Business Administrator; and Assistant Solicitor Brett Flower.

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

- I. Public Comment: None
- II. Called Legislative Meeting to Order: 6:02 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 19, 2024](#). Council unanimously approved the minutes as written.
- VII. Presentations, Awards and Announcements:
 - ▶ City Council will consider final passage of the 2025 Budget and Tax rate at its December 17th meeting.
- VIII. Meeting(s) Scheduled:
 - ▶ **Legislative Meeting:** The next legislative meeting of Council will be held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agenda items are due by 12 noon on December 11th.

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. 46 - A Bill Amending Article 136 “Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program of the Codified Ordinances. ([View](#)) (To change the title to “**The Smallwood Act,**” and reestablish its purpose; establish a non-discrimination policy, update definitions, create an Equal Business Opportunity Committee and its powers and duties; establish criteria for Small Business Enterprise and Local Business Enterprise; update contracting requirements; establish affirmative procurement initiatives, and certification and bidder registration; and amend penalties.)
Introduced by: Edquina Washington
Originator: Business Administration / Council

Introduction of Bill No. 46, Session 2024, A Bill Amending Article 136 “Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program of the Codified Ordinances to change the title to “**The Smallwood Act,**” and reestablish its purpose; establish a non-discrimination policy, update definitions, create an Equal Business Opportunity Committee and its powers and duties; establish criteria for Small Business Enterprise and Local Business Enterprise; update contracting requirements; establish affirmative procurement initiatives, and certification and bidder registration; and amend penalties, was introduced by Washington, read by short title, and deferred to the December 17 meeting of Council for consideration of final passage.

2. Introduction of Bill No. 47 - A Bill Establishing Article 156 “Welcoming and Access to Immigrants and Refugees” of the Codified Ordinances. ([View](#)) (By codifying the city’s practices related to the provision of city services without regard to refugee or immigration status and requiring city council to advocate for the adoption of similar practices and policies by other municipalities; providing for the severability of the ordinance; and providing that the ordinance shall take effect in accordance with Pennsylvania law.)
Introduced by: Edquina Washington
Originator: Council (Washington)

Motion to refer to committee: A motion was made by Johnescu, to move agenda item #2 (Bill No. 47) to committee. The motion did not receive a second, therefore, the motion died.

Introduction of Bill No. 47, Session 2024, A Bill Establishing Article 156 “Welcoming and Access to Immigrants and Refugees” of the Codified Ordinances by codifying the city’s practices related to the provision of city services without regard to refugee or immigration status and requiring city council to advocate for the adoption of similar practices and policies by other municipalities; providing for the severability of the ordinance; and providing that the ordinance shall take effect in accordance with Pennsylvania law, was introduced by Washington, read by short title, and came up for discussion.

Motion to amend. President Washington made a motion to make the following amendments to Bill No. 47:

Amendment #1

WHEREAS, the City of York boasts a diverse community ~~with almost 40 percent of the City's population identified with a Hispanic heritage, with 11 percent who speak English less than very well;~~

Amendment #2

WHEREAS, by adoption of this Ordinance, City Council encourages participation by members of Council in advocacy efforts ~~wishes to create a Welcoming City. legislate requirements that City Council take an active role in advocating that the City's efforts be expanded regionally.~~

Amendment #3

SECTION 3. ADVOCACY REQUIREMENTS.

City Council Advocacy ~~Requirements~~

City Council ~~may shall~~, as part of its annual work, advocate for the adoption of inclusive policies, such as those referenced in this ordinance. Those efforts may include, but may not be limited to:

Amendment #4

SECTION 3. ADVOCACY add subsection 4 as follows:

4. Any Council member that participates in advocacy initiatives in accordance with the intent of this ordinance shall report such advocacy efforts to Council.

Amendment #5

Remove SECTION 3. ADVOCACY, Subsection B, in its entirety as follows:

~~B. Reporting~~

~~City Council and City of York Human Relations Commission shall prepare and present annually a report detailing the advocacy efforts it has taken and the progress and results of such advocacy work, including, but not limited to, the advocacy efforts taken by other entities and associations City Council partnered with for such matters.~~

The motion to amend was seconded by Dennis and passed by the following vote: Yeas - Bupp, Johnescu, Dennis, Buckingham, Washington 5; Nays - 0.

President Washington then opened the floor for comment.

Dr. Daniel Alvalle, State Director, CASA PA, said this is a crucial step in addressing the protections of our immigrants. Clear guidelines and initiatives will encourage fair treatment regardless of one's background and will foster a more inclusive community. He said this act is essential because fear of retaliation could keep immigrants from seeking help and cause them to live in isolation. This will help create a safe and supportive environment.

Mirna Miranda, Organizing Director, CASA, thanked Council and the Administration for bringing this legislation to the table. It's important that trust is accomplished, and this is a start. This will give immigrants the opportunity to live with dignity and provide opportunities for community engagement. Immigrants will feel safe in reporting crimes for their protection without fear of retaliation. She said CASA is willing to work with the administration and members of the community.

Debra Detzel, YMCA, said they have worked with the Haitian community with education, the medical system, housing, and other life resources. This year she said they have welcomed more than 600 new families with about 2,000 new Haitians having arrived this year. We have five employees assigned to assisting our immigrant community. We have helped with protection status applications and humanitarian parole. She said many people are scared, although they have legal documents to stay in the United States, that they will be sent to places they are not wanted. She said this legislation is super important and she shared it in her class and the students were smiling and clapping. She thanked all who took part in drafting this legislation.

Carol Stowell, Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, said she represents those who welcome people of all nationalities, and they want to be their advocates. She thanked Council for its vision because she knows we are going to be facing difficult times ahead.

Mayor Michael Helfrich said York is a Welcoming City and he agrees with what's been said this evening and there is an executive order that has been in existence for the past 7 years establishing York as a Welcoming Community and we don't ask about immigration status under that executive order. Unfortunately, we are in a changing climate. He said [HR5717 "No Bailout for Sanctuary Cities Act"](#) is expected to get full support. He said President Trump tried to take federal money away from cities through HUD that is used to help build houses, provide career training, and help people in our community. He said they have begun the process of passing this as a law. If passed, HR5717 would prohibit cities and localities deemed sanctuary jurisdictions from receiving "any Federal funds" that the jurisdiction "intends to use for the benefit" of undocumented immigrants "including the provision of food, shelter, healthcare services, legal services, and transportation." He said Bill No. 47 puts us at greater risk of being a sanctuary city and will jeopardize our funding. He said he believes in the Trust Act and it's a great principal to have to protect people, but there is another body of government threatening to rip away \$2 million of money we use to help people. He asked Council to wait on this legislation to see what the incoming administration in Washington, D.C., will bring and how this legislation could risk our funding that we use to help our immigrant community. He said our current executive order is already protecting our immigrants.

President Washington thanked CASA for their work on this legislation. She said every resident in the City of York has a right to be safe and protected. She said no amount of money is worth the exchange of the safety and protection of our residents.

There being no further discussion, Bill No. 47, as amended, was deferred to the December 17 meeting of Council for consideration of final passage.

3. Introduction of Bill No. 48 - A Bill Amending Article 185 "Human Relations" of the Codified Ordinances. ([View](#)) (To include source of income as a protected class and to update language to make it consistent with applicable laws.)
Introduced by: Edquina Washington
Originator: Human Relations Commission

Introduction of Bill No. 48, Session 2024, A Bill amending Article 185 "Human Relations" of the City of York Codified Ordinances to include source of income as a protected class, update language in accordance with the Pennsylvania Department of Housing and Urban Development to allowing funding eligibility, and to update language to make it consistent with applicable laws, was introduced by Washington, read by short title, and deferred to the December 17 meeting of Council for consideration of final passage.

New Business

4. Resolution No. 109 - A Resolution Authorizing an agreement with Sun Life. ([View](#)) (To provide stop loss insurance for 2025)
Introduced by: Betsy Buckingham
Originator: Business Administration

Resolution No. 109, Session 2024, A Resolution authorizing an agreement with Sun Life for year 2025 stop loss insurance, was introduced by Buckingham, read at length, and on motion of Buckingham, seconded Bupp, Resolution No. 109 passed by the following vote: Yeas – Bupp, Johnescu, Dennis, Buckingham, Washington – 5; Nays – 0.

XI. Requests for Future Meetings: None

XII. Council Comment:

Vice President Buckingham expressed her concern with cars running red lights. She had a friend in the hospital from injuries sustained in a car accident. She said we all need to be very careful and mindful of others.

XIII. Administration Comment: None

XIV. Adjournment: The next legislative meeting of Council is scheduled for December 17, 2024 at 6PM in City Council Chambers. There being no further business, the December 3, 2024 meeting of Council adjourned at 6:30PM.

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



Dianna L. Thompson, City Clerk



Edquina Washington, President of Council