

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, June 6, 2017, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor William Mays presiding.

Present: Mark Caruso, Joseph Fawbush, and William Mays

Absent: Robert Fultz, Jr., and Dee Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, and Bill Bradshaw, City Attorney

The invocation was given by Pastor Freddie Powers and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilman Caruso.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following vote: YES – Caruso, Fawbush, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – Fultz and Belcher, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the May 16, 2017, meeting as presented.

262338

There was no one present for the Audience for Visitors.

A public hearing was held to solicit input on the proposed 2017-2018 budget for the City of Norton which consists of \$9,617,576 for the General Operating Fund, \$3,135,250 for the Enterprise Fund, and \$1,386,620 for the Social Services Fund.

The City Manager presented a brief synopsis of the proposed budget, via a PowerPoint presentation, and noted the FY 2017-2018 City Budget has been properly advertised. Mr. Ramey said the General Operating Fund includes no proposed revenue enhancements and no capital projects except for the lease of a new garbage truck. He said the budget contains step increases in salary and benefits for employees who qualified and a two-percent raise for only state funded employees. Mr. Ramey said the General Operating Fund shows a net decrease of \$38,287 over FY 2017 and no surplus funds are needed to balance the budget.

The Enterprise Fund totals \$3,135,250 and proposes a revenue enhancement of 25 cents to the base rate per 1,000 gallons. Mr. Ramey said there will be no changes to the Water Improvement Fees Schedule or the current sewer percentage rates. The Enterprise Fund represents an increase of \$19,797 over last year's budget, which City Administration attributes to a decrease in water consumption due to less customers and energy efficient appliances, increase in debt, and salary and benefit increases for qualifying employees.

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The Social Services Operating Fund represents an increase of \$79,670 over the FY 2017 budget and is a result of changes to state funded programs and a two-percent raise for state employees. Mr. Ramey said the City's appropriation will remain level at \$345,877.

Mayor Mays opened the public hearing.

There being no public input, Mayor Mays closed the public hearing.

Mayor Mays commented that during his 31 year tenure on City Council the FY 2018 budget has been the most challenging to his recollection, and he thanked City Administration for their effort on preparing the financial plan.

Mr. Ramey stated he was contacted by Mr. Brandon Stidham, a teacher at John I. Burton High School, and Mr. Stidham advised him that the school was applying for a High School Program Innovation Grant (HSPI). Mr. Ramey said Mr. Stidham asked him if he would write a letter of support for the application, which he did, and provided Council with a copy in their packets. Mr. Ramey noted Superintendent Gina Wohlford and Mr. Stidham were in attendance to provide Council with information on the school's effort to start a new curriculum at John I. Burton High School.

Superintendent Wohlford advised the HSPI grant is an innovation grant funded by the Department of Education and there is a great deal of flexibility within the guidelines to be innovative. She said Norton City Schools has been trying to start a hospitality and tourism curriculum at John I. Burton to coincide with the City's efforts to promote adventure tourism. She stated the HSPI grant is initially a planning grant, and if awarded, the school system will begin writing a syllabus for the program in 2017 and then implement the courses in Fall 2018.

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Mr. Stidham said the grant provides a unique opportunity for students to partner with the business community. He said Norton City Schools does a great job of preparing students for college and trade jobs. However, the division wants to make sure that students who would like to join the workforce immediately after high school have the skills needed to be successful as well. Mr. Stidham said the HSPI grant will take the traditional class outside the classroom setting by offering internships to students with local business partners.

Mayor Mays thanked Superintendent Wohlford and Mr. Stidham for their presentation.

Mr. Ramey said City Administration has prepared a list of FY 2017 Budget Amendments totaling \$630,453, of which \$349,942 is unappropriated reserves and \$280,511 is additional revenues for Council's consideration and authorization to advertise a public hearing.

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After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to authorize the City Manager to advertise a public hearing on the FY 2017 Budget Amendments as presented in Council's packets.

In their packets, Council had received a request from the Commissioner of the Revenue to refund erroneously assessed personal property taxes. The refund is to Enterprise Fleet Management for 2016 erroneously assessed personal property taxes in the amount of \$1,182.86.

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After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to approve the refund to Enterprise Fleet Management in the amount of \$1,182.86 for erroneously assessed personal property taxes.

Council had one transfer to confirm. The transfer was to the Norton City Schools, dated May 25, 2017, in the amount of \$250,000 to cover May 2017 payroll expenditures.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Caruso, Fawbush, Mays, NO – None,

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ABSENT – Fultz and Belcher, Council moved to confirm the transfer to Norton City Schools, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to go into closed meeting to discuss personnel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia, as amended. 262344

Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

The City Attorney left at this time. 262345

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to go back into open meeting. 262346

Mayor Mays declared Council back in open meeting.

The Clerk polled each member of Council as to the Certification of Closed Meeting with each answering yes. The Clerk then read a Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. 262347

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

In comments from the City Manager, Mr. Ramey advised the following:

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles recognized 21 jurisdictions across the Commonwealth for having no traffic deaths in 2016 and the Norton Police Department was one of those precincts that received an award.

City Administration has been working with the coordinator of the Cloudsplitter 100 Race to assist in the relocation of the race from Kentucky to Virginia. The race is a four-event competition that includes a 100-mile trail race, 50k trail race, 50k trail race, and 25k trail race. Routes have to be determined for each race and the event has already been advertised for October 7th, which is the same day as the Hellbender 10k and the Woodbooger Festival. Everyone is working to overcome the challenges in moving the race from Kentucky to Virginia and City Administration is hopeful that present hurdles will be resolved. 262348

The Best Friend Festival, Mountains of Music Event at the Country Cabin, and a Full Moon Hike are upcoming events in the City.

An event was held at Flag Rock June 3<sup>rd</sup> highlighting National Trails Day.

In comments from Council:

Councilman Caruso asked Mr. Ramey for an electronic copy of the Hill Studio Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilman Caruso asked the City Manager if he had received a copy of the firing range concept he had prepared.

Mr. Ramey confirmed that he had received proposed design. 262349

Councilman Caruso asked the City Manager what needed to be done with the “no hunting” designation in the City’s recreation area.

Mr. Ramey advised that the issue will need to be placed on Council’s agenda and an ordinance will need to be adopted prohibiting hunting in the areas marked as recreational.

Councilman Caruso asked the status of the “no yard sales” on Park Avenue without a permit and permission.

Mr. Ramey advised City Administration had reached out to the property owner of the one area that is of concern and the owner was not aware that individuals were having yard sales on the property. The owner has contacted Norton Police Department and presented the police department with a letter stating they will charge individuals with trespassing.

Chief Lane advised there has been one instance where the police department provided an individual with a Letter of the No Trespassing requested by the owner and the individual’s information was gathered for tracking.

Mr. Ramey said Norton’s Building Inspector Winfred Collins located language in the Zoning Ordinance regarding yard sales and that Mr. Bradshaw advised enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance would be charged to the property owner.

Councilman Caruso said he has been speaking with the Virginia Department of Economic Partnership (VDEP) and asked Mr. Ramey if the City has a portfolio of all currently available business sites.

Mr. Ramey said he has most of the information on available properties within the City, and when he receives a call from a potential renter, he will offer the prospective property owner’s phone number to the renter or offer to call the property owner on behalf of the potential renter.

Councilman Caruso said if we create a portfolio of vacant properties it will assist the City and be a benefit to property owners if they will keep the information updated.

Mr. Ramey said he could reach out to the property owners to see if they would be interested in participating with the City in creating a portfolio of their properties.

Councilman Caruso asked if the City could do anything to make property owners place shades on the windows of buildings that are being used for merely storage, citing the old Bowers Auto building.

Mr. Ramey said there is nothing in the City’s current ordinances or zoning that would require a business to obscure the contents in their buildings.

Councilman Caruso asked if the City had a plan to replace the missing ceiling tiles under the awning at the Community Center.

Mr. Ramey explained the City will replace the tiles with a waterproof ceiling tile but is waiting for the new budget year due to the cost of removing the building and electrical service this budget year. Mr. Ramey also noted the school is supposed to paint a mural on the wall but he has not heard from school personnel regarding their plan.

Councilman Fawbush said he has had some preliminary discussions with local civic groups and they are working together to illuminate Flag Rock. Currently Councilman Fawbush has received verbal commitments from the civic groups and potentially another contributor of \$15,000 to \$20,000 for the project and he estimates they will need approximately \$25,000 in additional funds to complete the project.

Mr. Ramey advised former City Manager Ernie Ward had a 2000 analysis on lighting Flag Rock with solar power. Mr. Ramey said Appalachian Voices currently has an

initiative involving solar power and they are looking for pilot projects. Mr. Ramey said he has provided Adam Wells of Appalachian Voices with a copy of the 2000 analysis and they are considering it as a demonstration project. However, Mr. Ramey said he is not certain solar power is an option for lighting Flag Rock but he wanted to mention to Council that Appalachian Voices is studying the site.

Councilman Fawbush said they need some initial planning money to determine what is needed to light the rock itself and the flag in addition to the type of materials used and the location.

Councilman Caruso suggested a public/private partnership with Old Dominion Power. He suggested writing a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of Old Dominion Power requesting donating the cable from the transformer to Flag Rock.

Councilman Fawbush said a committee is needed to determine the scope of the project and a design firm should be hired to illustrate the committee's vision.

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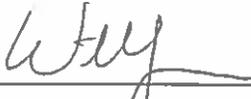
Councilman Fawbush said the Woodbooger needs a timeline of how he arrived in Norton, if he has a family, and, if so, what are their names. His daughter Morgan suggested a contest to solicit ideas on the Woodbooger, so he is going to advertise at the Best Friend Festival and in the Coalfield Progress for individuals to contribute their ideas to chronicle the Woodbooger's local history.

Mayor Mays commented that he was saddened to hear that former Principal and Superintendent of Norton City Schools Mr. Bill Passon passed away Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> in Bluefield, West Virginia. He was an inspiration to our youth and did a tremendous job as principal at John I. Burton High School and as superintendent of Norton City Schools.

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There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA

  
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William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council