

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, September 5, 2017, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor William Mays presiding.

Present: Mark Caruso, Robert Fultz, Jr., William Mays, Joseph Fawbush, and Delores 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 First Sergeant Greg Mays.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the August 15, 2017, meeting as presented. 262429

There was no response to the Mayor's Call for Visitors. 262430

A public hearing was held to receive public input on the purchase of two emergency vehicles using a loan/grant package from the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDARD) for the police department.

Mayor Mays opened the public hearing.

There being no comments, Mayor Mays closed the public hearing. 262431

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt a resolution to purchase two emergency vehicles for the police department using a loan/grant package from the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development. (Insert)

Included in Council's packets was a Resolution Amending Chapter 14, Section 14-144 of the Norton City Code that currently allows hunting in the Flag Rock Recreation Area.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Ramey displayed City Code Section 14-144 relating to the discharge of a firearm in the City limits and advised current city code conflicts with Council's goals and use of Flag Rock Recreation Area. He advised Council directed the City Attorney to prepare a resolution amending this section of the code to prohibit hunting in the Conservation Zone in the area south of Chapman Street and Laurel Avenue. Mr. Ramey said a public hearing has been advertised to allow public input on removing this language from City Code Chapter 14, Section 14-144.

There were no comments from Council prior to the public hearing.

Mayor Mays opened the public hearing.

Mr. Seth Thompson, a Wildlife Biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, asked Council if the proposed legislation addressed archery equipment or just focused on the discharge of firearms in the Flag Rock Recreation Area.

Mr. Bradshaw stated the resolution only addressed the discharge of firearms in the Conservation Zone. 262432

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt a Resolution Amending Chapter 14, Section 14-144 of the Norton City Code prohibiting the discharge of a firearm for legal hunting purposes in the area south of Chapman Street and Laurel Avenue.
(Insert)

Mr. Ramey said the City has been awarded an AmeriCorps/National Civilian Conservation Corps Team Delta 5 (AmeriCorps/NCCC Team Delta 5) for the next eight weeks and members were invited to tonight's meeting along with City Trail Coordinator Shayne Fields who introduced the team.

Mr. Fields informed Council this year's team will finish the Magnolia Trail in two weeks and will begin working on other trail projects as weather permits. He then asked each team member to introduce themselves and note where they are from: Jonathan Belka (Virginia); Sylvester Mabry III (California); Leisha Malone (Alabama); Ray Blair (Atlanta); Renjia Huang (New York); Cody Carver (Georgia); Robert Penick (Ohio); Jackie Miles (Iowa); Ashley Kalihoff (Oregon); Jerry Veals (Illinois); Kaseim Taylor (North Carolina); and Michael Address (Missouri).

262433

Mr. Ramey said on rainy days city staff is working to connect the team with the school system, Camp Bethel, and the Country Cabin to assist them with projects. The AmeriCorps/NCCC Team Delta 5 is also going to conduct outreach by tabling at the High Knob Naturalist Rally, Woodbooger Festival, and in the schools and colleges.

At this time, Mayor Mays thanked the AmeriCorps/NCCC Team Delta 5 for their service to the community and a group picture was taken with Council.

Dr. Kristen Westover, President of Mountain Empire Community College, introduced herself to Council and gave a brief update on Mountain Empire Community College (MECC). She advised that enrollment is down 1.5 percent due to the decline in the area's population. She said the college has added two new courses - Cyber Security and Drone Technology. Dr. Westover said the college will begin reviewing its current mission statement, goals, values, and vision for the future to ensure the college is meeting the present needs of the community. As part of this process, the college will be mailing invitations to a Meet and Greet to be held on Tuesday, October 17th, and Council is encouraged to attend and provide input.

262434

Mayor Mays welcomed Dr. Westover and thanked her for her presentation.

The City Manager said that over the past several years the City has been experiencing problems with bears and other animals getting into trash receptacles. Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Ramey presented an overview of the nuisance problems and said the City, through two grants from the Department of Game Inland Fisheries (DGIF) and local matching funds, was able to purchase 18 bear-resistant containers and three dumpster tops. These containers have been placed throughout Flag Rock Recreation Area and other areas on High Knob in an effort to reduce the problem. The dumpster tops were placed at Norton Elementary and Middle School and at the homeless shelter in Ramsey. City Administration would like to place additional receptacles throughout the City where bears and other animals are getting into trash receptacles causing a nuisance in residential areas.

262435

At this time, Mr. Ramey introduced Mr. Seth Thompson, a wildlife biologist with the Virginia Department of Game Inland Fisheries (DGIF), who was present to provide more information on bears in Norton.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Thompson presented information on the number of black bears in the area, management of the bear population, and the number of black bear complaints received statewide for 2017. He said in October DGIF will have a three-day bear season in an effort to control the area bear population. He also shared suggestions on how residents could reduce the number of bears and other animals on their property. Mr. Thompson said DGIF partners with local governments to install electrical fences and dumpster lids to curtail the number of bears in trash receptacles. Mr. Thompson said citizens who continue to experience bear problems can contact the Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline.

Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Thompson for his presentation and for the DGIF grants.

Council was presented a Resolution to Approve a Proposed Name Change for the Planning District One Community Services Board (PD1).

Mr. Ramey informed Council that PD1 actually changed its name a few years ago and just recently found out that the board must receive authorization from each governing locality to formally change the name. Mr. Ramey said Donna Stanley, Financial Officer for PD1, was present to answer any questions Council may have regarding this request.

262436

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the resolution authorizing the name change from Planning District One Community Services Board to Planning District One Behavioral Health Services.

Included in Council's packets was a Code of Conduct related to the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDARD) for the purchase of two emergency vehicles for the police department.

Mr. Ramey said in order for the City to receive grant funds from USDARD, City Council must approve a Code of Conduct.

262437

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Code of Conduct to meet USDARD's criteria to receive grant funds for the purchase two emergency vehicles.

In their packets, Council had a request from The Wood Booger Grill to use the City's "Woodbooger" Service Mark for the purpose of naming their restaurant and certain menu items.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to approve the request of The Wood Booger Grill to use the City's Service Mark "Woodbooger" in the naming of the restaurant and certain menu items.

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The City Attorney noted that the approval of the use of the city's service mark is on such condition as the City Manager approves for a period of time as with the other licenses that have been approved by Council.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, 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, and discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publically held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (3) of the Code of Virginia, as amended.

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Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

The City Attorney left at this time.

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

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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.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

262442

Mayor Mays opened the floor for nominations to the Norton Planning Commission for a four-year term to expire on July 31, 2021.

Councilman Caruso nominated Robert Mitchell Kennedy to be appointed to the Norton Planning Commission for a four-year term to expire on July 31, 2021.

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Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved that the nominations cease.

Mayor Mays declared Robert Mitchell Kennedy appointed to the Norton Planning Commission for a four-year term to expire on July 31, 2021.

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

He placed at each member's desk the financial report from the Norton Little League 11- and 12-year-old Girls Softball Team that qualified for the State Softball Tournament in McLean, Virginia.

Real Estate and Personal Property tax tickets will be mailed at the end of the week.

A copy of the governor's press release has been placed at each member's desk. The press release reads that the City has been approved for a \$40,000 Building Collaborative Communities (BCC) grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). As Council is aware, these funds will be joined with Appalachian Regional Commission's Power Grant (ARC Power Grant) to complete a regional master plan for High Knob for the City of Norton and Wise and Scott Counties.

Traffic counts for Route 619 and Flag Rock entrance have been placed at each member's desk for review.

262444

The city has made it to the final round of Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine's 2017 Top Adventure Towns. The final six towns will be divided into three categories according to the size of the community, and the winners will be selected from the remaining six towns. Winners of the 2017 Top Adventure Towns will be announced in the upcoming weeks.

City Administration is continuing to work on the Cloudsplitter100 Trail Race. At this time, volunteers are especially needed for the aid stations.

Councilman Caruso said he believes that several of the young people on the rescue squad would volunteer to work the Cloudsplitter100 Trail Race, and that most of the volunteers would be certified emergency medical technicians (EMT).

Mr. Ramey said they have discussed the idea of using rescue squad members and he is waiting on a list of responsibilities and duties for race volunteers from Race Director Susan Howell.

Mr. Ramey said at the September 19th meeting Councilman Fawbush asked that the winners of the Woodbooger Story Contest be recognized. Also, Mr. Ramey handed out a packet to Council Members from Kitty Barker, Executive Director of the Heart of Appalachia (HOA) that contained two resolutions the HOA would like Council to consider at the next meeting, and the packet includes an update on HOA activities.

He said upcoming activities in the City include the 2017 Woodbooger Geo-Trail, Dock Boggs Festival, Benges Revenge Bike Race, High Knob Hellbender, Cloudsplitter100 Trail Race, and the Woodbooger Festival.

Mr. Ramey advised the University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA-Wise) has provided two season tickets and a parking pass that can be checked out in the City Manager's office by any Council Member wishing to attend a football game at the college during the 2017 season.

In comments from Council:

Councilwoman Belcher said she attended a Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEO) meeting with Mr. Ramey at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

She said the Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board is going to start working in area high schools to help students decide what path they going to take after graduation. She said she feels students need help determining a path prior to the tenth grade and that recognizing a student's abilities earlier would assist them in navigating a more precise path after graduation.

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Mr. Ramey added that the Workforce Development Board wants to participate in a program called "Certified Community." A Certified Community offers a workforce that is certified on three different levels by using a standardized test that is given in high school, college, and at the Virginia Employment Commission. These test results are then entered into a database where companies who utilize the Certified Community program can access the information to determine if an area's skilled workforce meets their company's specific needs.

Councilman Fultz said John I. Burton High School's 2017 Football Homecoming is not going to be your typical homecoming this year. He said the National Honor Society and the Cross Country Team is doing a Raider Heroes Glow Walk/5K fundraiser for St. Jude's Children's Hospital (St. Jude's) in honor of Harper Potter. The event is scheduled at 7:00

262446

p.m., Sunday, October 1st to kick off Burton's Homecoming week. He said the homecoming theme this year is "Nothing Greater Than a Raider" and that kids are going to dress up in super hero costumes, which is fitting because St. Jude's calls their fundraisers heroes. Councilman Fultz said grand marshals for the homecoming parade are students Harper Potter and Clay Hart, and former student and current Burton teacher Madison Adams who have all been patients at St. Jude's.

Councilman Caruso said Chris Jones, Chairman of the Norton Tourism Committee, had suggested a joint meeting between the Tourism Committee, Norton Industrial Development Authority, and City Council and he wanted to know if any dates have been determined for that joint meeting.

He said Mr. Chris Jones, volunteer organizer of the High Knob Music Festival, had requested a donation for the festival and that Council needed to make a decision on the request.

Councilman Caruso asked Mr. Ramey if the Highway Safety Committee had met and discussed the highway crossing issue.

Mr. Ramey said the Highway Safety Committee did meet and discussed all the highway crossing issues in the City and determined that any crosswalk installed in the City must be installed to meet the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) standards, even if the City has to apply for grant funds to install the crosswalks correctly.

Councilman Caruso said another crosswalk issue was brought to his attention and that is on the viaduct as you are coming from Main Avenue, S.W.

Mr. Ramey said to install a crosswalk on the viaduct the sidewalk would have to be ramped down to meet VDOT standards and he is not sure there is enough room on the bridge to meet criteria required by VDOT. Mr. Ramey said installation of a crosswalk signal would probably be the best solution for this pedestrian crossing.

Councilman Caruso asked if Council was back on schedule for Saturday meetings.

Councilman Caruso asked Mr. Ramey if a determination had been made on whether the City would install hammock poles in Flag Rock Camping Ground.

Mr. Ramey advised Michele Knox, the City's Parks & Recreation Director, was researching the request looking for samples and trying to determine what has worked at other locations.

Councilman Caruso said he had received a lot of compliments from out of town visitors on what the City is doing with the trail system on High Knob.

Councilman Fawbush gave each Council Member a copy of the writings he had received for the Woodbooger Story Contest. He said over 20 submissions were received from Wise, Coeburn, Pound, and Gray, Tennessee. He noted a group of five individuals read the stories then ranked their top five writings and submitted their rankings to determine the winner. Councilman Fawbush said Ms. Olivia Basham from Wise was the overall winner and that six submissions were runner ups. He said he has written a letter to the first place winner and to each of the runner ups inviting them to the September 19th Council meeting to be recognized for their participation.

Mayor Mays had no comments.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council