

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, September 19, 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 the City Manager and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Officer Jordan Baker.

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 September 5, 2017, meeting as presented.

During the Audience for Visitors, Mr. Tim Cassell, of 714 Laurel Lane and vice chairman of the Norton Planning Commission, came forward to share information and to give a couple of updates.

Mr. Cassell first shared that the city was well represented at Bristol Rhythm and Roots over the weekend with five Norton musicians performing at the music festival. The five artists that played at the music festival are graduates of John I. Burton High School. Mr. Cassell also stated that the tax rate the city charges is too cheap for the services that citizens are provided. He noted two occasions that city services were recently provided that had a direct impact upon him and that the response and service were outstanding. He reiterated public services provided to the citizens of Norton are too inexpensive and the city's response to citizen requests is outstanding.

At this time, Mr. Cassell said he serves on two boards for the City of Norton. He is the city's representative on the Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) Board and is the current vice chairman of the city's Planning Commission. He gave an update on the city's involvement with MECC stating that city enrollment is up one percent. Mr. Cassell said Norton has 155 students attending MECC and 85 dual enrollment students are currently taking classes at the college. He said dual enrollment now counts for the largest number of students attending classes on the campus of MECC. Mr. Cassell noted that dual enrollment is an important component of the community college.

Mr. Cassell said the Planning Commission has been reviewing the city's Comprehensive Plan and the plan process for several months, and he would like to provide an update and timeline for the review. Mr. Cassell said at the last Planning Commission meeting the city manager had a professional planner attend the meeting to provide members with an overview of the comprehensive plan process. Mr. Cassell said segments of the Comprehensive Plan are dictated by state code and must be included in the city's updated plan. He went on to explain that the document can be as broad or as narrow as Council determines and include as few or as many citizens and businesses as Council would like. Mr. Cassell said over 400 citizens participated in updating the last Comprehensive Plan. He noted that when the Planning Commission began reviewing the

current Comprehensive Plan, members feared the document was hindering the City from conducting business due to the age of the document. The Commission learned that portions of the document are still relevant and aspects of the document need to be updated. The Planning Commission is hopeful that the Comprehensive Plan can be updated in nine months. Mr. Cassell said he would like to come back to Council in November and give a plan of progress and schedule a joint session with City Council and the Planning Commission. He said a Comprehensive Plan update is an enormous task and everything Council does is related to this document. Mr. Cassell said the new Comprehensive Plan needs to be another 20-year document that future Councils can use to conduct business and it must be done correctly. He said Council will have some hard decisions to make in giving the Planning Commission direction on updating the Comprehensive Plan but the hardest decision will be funding.

On behalf of Council, Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Cassell for the updates.

At this time, Mayor Mays turned the meeting over to Vice Mayor Fawbush.

Vice Mayor Fawbush said in June 2017, the Woodbooger Festival Committee decided the Woodbooger needed an official story. The committee decided to have a writing contest and allow area students to submit a story. The committee included criteria that had to be included in the story and 30 essays were received from students at Central High School, Eastside High School, Wise Middle School, and one student from Gray, Tennessee. A committee of five individuals read the submitted stories and ranked them. The overall winner of the Woodbooger Story Writing Contest was Olivia Basham from Central High School and included six runners-up: Alex Wheatley, Emily Eades, Emma Chandler, Krissy Varner, Alex Vincer, and Marissa Bell. Two of the runners-up, Alex Vincer, from Wise Middle School, and Marissa Bell, from Central High School, were in attendance and were recognized for their stories. Vice Mayor Fawbush introduced Alex and Marissa, presented them with gifts from the city, and a group photo was taken with Council. Vice Mayor Fawbush thanked the students for participating in the writing contest and said the 30 entries will be used to create a comprehensive official story on the Woodbooger.

Mayor Mays thanked Vice Mayor Fawbush for his work on the Woodbooger event.

Mr. Ramey advised that the city received notification that the Virginia Department of Elections has decertified Direct Record Electronic (DRE) voting equipment in Virginia, and that the State Board of Elections approved the request in an effort to increase security and integrity of Virginia's voting system in future elections.

Mr. Mike Brown, Chairman of the City's Electoral Board, gave an update on the state's requirement for voting equipment that will be approved for the upcoming November 2017 election. Mr. Brown explained that the voting machines the city replaced last year are the DRE machines decertified by the state. He said the new voting machines are certified by the state and will provide a ballot once the voter has made their selections. He said the ballot is then fed into the tabulator which will count the voter's selection and then produce a paper trail. The paper trail is stored in the tabulator and can be used for a recount if needed. Mr. Brown said the city is in a good position because of purchasing the equipment the Electoral Board recommended last year. Other localities are scrambling to replace their voting equipment before the November election and trying to find funds to pay for it he noted.

Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Brown for the update on the city's voting equipment.

Included in Council packets was a Resolution in Support of the Virginia Coalfield Regional Tourism Development Authority, "doing business as" Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority (HOA), Request for Modifications to the Virginia Code Related to Their Board Membership.

Mr. Ramey read an email he received in August 2017 from Kitty Barker, Executive Director of the HOA, requesting two items from the Virginia General Assembly. The email stated the first item was to create two positions on the HOA Board from each locality and the second was a separate resolution requesting \$100,000 biennium for two years beginning in 2018 from the Virginia General Assembly for a total of \$200,000 to fund an aggressive marketing plan. Mr. Ramey said there have been revisions to the two resolutions since the last council meeting and that members have the up-to-date resolutions in their packets.

After a brief discussion with the City Attorney on some of the language in the resolutions, Mr. Bradshaw said he did not have a problem with the language in the resolutions. He also noted that once the state receives the resolutions from the localities the state will rewrite the resolutions to read as the state so chooses.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the Resolution in Support of the Virginia Coalfield Regional Tourism Development Authority, "doing business as" Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority (HOA), request for legislative language change to the Virginia Code to increase the number of board members to 18 members. (Insert)

Presented to Council in their packets was the second resolution from HOA requesting support for the authority's request for \$200,000 in funding from the Virginia General Assembly.

Mr. Ramey said he thought the HOA asked for funding from the General Assembly each year and he thinks HOA believes the funding request will carry more substance if it is supported with resolutions from each locality.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the Resolution in Support of the Virginia Coalfield Regional Tourism Development Authority, "doing business as" Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority (HOA), Request for Funding from the Virginia General Assembly in the amount of \$200,000 for the next biennium in the amount of \$100,000 each year beginning in 2018. (Insert)

Mr. Ramey said earlier this year, Council approved an amendment to Pathfinders Outdoor Adventures, LLC, (POA) Special Use Permit to utilize the City of Norton's Firing Range for firearms training and classes and to allow limited public access to the facility. Mr. Ramey said, at that time, POA advised they wanted to apply for a National Rifle Association (NRA) grant to make upgrades to the city's firing range. During the application process, POA discovered they could not be the grant applicant. At tonight's meeting, Councilman Caruso, owner of POA, will present an Improvement Plan for Council's consideration and, if approved, Council's authorization for the city to submit a grant application to the NRA.

Councilman Caruso, via a PowerPoint presentation, showed POA's plan to make improvements to the city's shooting range. He said POA would like to develop the range utilizing the city's workforce to make improvements. Councilman Caruso presented a detailed plan that would be executed in two phases. He said the city is eligible for two types of grants from the NRA. The first grant is a matching grant, in which the city can use city labor as an in-kind match. The second grant is the NRA Foundation Range Grant which requires certification that qualified groups such as Boy Scouts of America, local law enforcement, and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) will benefit from the shooting range. Councilman Caruso advised he has spoken with Chief Lane, the ROTC Army Unit at the University of Virginia's College at Wise, and Boy Scout Troop 301 Leader Mr. Teddy Huff for letters of support for the NRA grants. He said he received a letter of support from the ROTC unit today and has given the letter to Mr. Ramey.

Councilman Fultz asked Councilman Caruso if he had a cost estimate for the two phases.

Councilman Caruso said he believes the total cost to make the improvements presented is \$50,000, which represents \$25,000 from the NRA and \$25,000 in-kind contribution from the city. Councilman Caruso noted that if the NRA awards the city \$5,000 then there would be additional phases, but until the first grant is awarded, POA will not know how many phases will be needed to complete the planned improvements.

Mayor Mays asked Mr. Ramey if Chief Lane supported applying for the grants.

Mr. Ramey said Chief Lane has worked with Councilman Caruso and Chief Lane's design suggestions have been included in Councilman Caruso's plan. Mr. Ramey said he believes Chief Lane supports the improvements to the firing range as long as the primary use is for the police department.

Councilman Caruso said the City owns the firing range and the police department's use of the shooting range is priority.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Council Fultz, and passed by the following vote: YES – Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSTAIN – Caruso, ABSENT – None, Council moved to authorize the City Manager to apply for both NRA grants.

Included in Council's packets was a request from The Cave Church, of 5451 Industrial Park Way, for a sewer tap. Mr. Ramey said the request is outside the city limits in Esserville near the transfer station. He said the church is located below the city's sewer line so the church is required to have a pumping station. Mr. Ramey said the pumping station is strictly owned and maintained by The Cave Church.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to approve the installation of one outside sewer tap request for The Cave Church, of 5451 Industrial Park Way.

Council had one transfer to confirm. This transfer was to Norton City Schools, dated August 28, 2017, in the amount of \$200,000 to cover August 2017 payroll expenditures.

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 confirm the transfer to Norton City Schools as stated above.

At this time, Mr. Ramey asked Mayor Mays to revisit the approved sewer connection to add a time limit on the installation of the outside connection with similar past requests.

After a brief discussion, Councilman Caruso amended his original motion to approve the sewer connection to include approval of the installation of one outside sewer tap request for The Cave Church, of 5451 Industrial Park Way, to expire in one year, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and approved by unanimous vote, Council moved to approve one outside sewer connection request for The Cave Church, of 5451 Industrial Park Way, to expire in one year.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, 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.

Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

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

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 Caruso, 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 of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

Mayor Mays opened the floor for nominations to the Mountain Empire Older Citizens Advisory Board for a two-year term to expire on September 15, 2019.

Councilman Caruso nominated Michele Knox to be reappointed to the Mountain Empire Older Citizens Advisory Board for a two-year term to expire on September 15, 2019.

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

Mayor Mays declared Michele Knox reappointed to the Mountain Empire Older Citizens Advisory Board for a two-year term to expire on September 15, 2019.

Mayor Mays opened the floor for two nominations to the Norton Tourism Committee for a four-year term to expire on September 30, 2021.

Councilwoman Belcher nominated Jane Sandt to be reappointed and Patty Bates to be appointed to the Norton Tourism Committee for four-year terms to expire on September 30, 2021.

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

Mayor Mays declared Jane Sandt reappointed and Patty Bates appointed to the Norton Tourism Committee for a four-year term to expire on September 30, 2021.

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

City Administration will be begin working with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) within the next 30 days to get under contract and to attend the required workshop for the \$700,000 grant awarded for downtown revitalization. He also thanked Council members who were able to attend the award announcement in Abingdon.

The AmeriCorps team that was assigned to the city was relocated to Florida on Monday to help with the Hurricane disaster relief in that state.

Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine 2017 Top Adventure Town contest is over and the winners will be announced in the magazine's November issue.

City Administration is continuing to plan for the Cloudsplitter 100 Trail Race and volunteers are needed for aid stations.

He presented a draft resolution for Council review prior to meeting in October that supports the formation of the Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA). Mr. Ramey said the first step is for each locality to approve the establishment of RIFA which will work together on economic development projects on a regional level. He said Mr. Bradshaw has reviewed the resolution and had some comments that he has passed along to the others.

Mr. Rick Watts will be present to discuss the recent Woodbooger Geo-Trail event. Mr. Ramey said he placed at each member's desk a blog post that one of the geocache participants posted from Suffolk, Virginia.

Copies of the latest Retail Sales Tax Report, the latest Reservoir Report, and a sample ballot have been placed at each member's desk.

The High Knob Hellbender, Cloudsplitter 100 Trail Race, and the Woodbooger Festival are planned for Saturday, October 7th.

Also, the University of Virginia's College at Wise football season ticket for two seats and parking pass are available to be checked out in the City Manager's office.

In comments from the City Attorney:

Mr. Bradshaw said he will work on the language presented in the resolution supporting the organization of RIFA. He said the language deals more with counties than cities so there will be a difference in nomenclature before the next council meeting. He said the resolution is harmless and provides a basis for an overall organizational concept. He said the substance will come when RIFA begins working on a project and details must be worked out between the localities.

In comments from Council:

Councilwoman Belcher had no comments.

Councilman Fultz commended Mr. Ramey for his foresight on the downtown revitalization grant and for the work that had been done two years prior to receiving the grant.

Councilman Fultz said the John I. Burton Hall of Fame game is coming up September 29th and the banquet is September 30th. Councilman Fultz asked Mr. Cassell if tickets were still available for the banquet.

Mr. Cassell said he believes tickets are still available.

Councilman Fultz reminded Council the Raider Heroes Glow Walk/5K fundraiser for St. Jude's Children's Hospital is October 1st.

He said John I. Burton's Homecoming Parade is scheduled at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, October 5th, with the homecoming game to follow on Friday, October 6th.

Councilman Fultz said it was a privilege to run into Rick Watts at the Wood Booger Grill on Friday before the Woodbooger Geo-trail event. He said Mr. Watts had about 50 participants dining at the restaurant and taking photos with the Woodbooger. Councilman Fultz said he first commends Councilman Fawbush for his foresight on promoting the Woodbooger.

Councilman Caruso commended city administration for their hard work on obtaining grants for city projects and said the city is fortunate to have so many good citizens that work together to move the city forward.

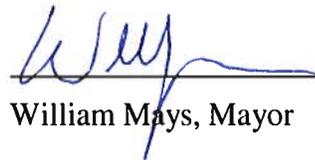
Councilman Fawbush had no comments.

Mayor Mays said several members of Council and Mr. Ramey will be attending the Virginia Municipal League Conference next month and he suggests Council has one meeting next month on Tuesday, October 17th.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council approved meeting once next month on Tuesday, October 17th.

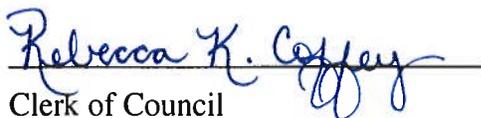
There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council