

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, August 21, 2018, 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 Ken Taylor and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Mays, Fawbush, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the August 7, 2018, meeting as presented.

262815

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

262816

Mr. Ramey said at the last council meeting, city administration presented a presentation on the School Resource Officer (SRO) Incentive Grant Program which is being funded through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. He said he was informed by Superintendent Gina Wohlford, who was in attendance, that the school board approved the city's application to apply for the grant at the August 13, 2018, board meeting.

Superintendent Wohlford added that the school board is aware that the grant is for one year and that the SRO may have to be pulled from NEMS at times for police department matters. Dr. Wohlford informed council that the school board understands that the grant is not sustainable past one year unless the school system finds other funding opportunities.

Police Chief James Lane presented a PowerPoint presentation on the (SRO) Incentive Grant Program providing the city's obligations, the benefits of having an SRO in NEMS, and concerns about not having an SRO at the school. He said after a thorough evaluation he concluded that the police department can provide an SRO at NEMS but manpower is a concern.

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Councilman Caruso thanked Chief Lane for his analysis and Mayor Mays thanked Chief Lane for the presentation.

After Chief Lane answered a few questions from council, and upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council authorized city administration to apply for the School Resource Officer (SRO) Incentive Grant Program that is being funded through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services to provide an SRO at NEMS for one year.

Council was given an update on the Proposed Façade Improvement Program by the city manager. Mr. Ramey said the purpose of the façade program is to improve blighted storefront properties and to invest in the downtown business district. He presented a PowerPoint presentation that showed earlier façade improvement programs that were very successful in changing the look of downtown and incentivizing economic development.

262818

Mr. Ramey said the current revitalization project includes the 800-block downtown and one block back from Park Avenue. He asked council to authorize the façade program and recommended \$45,000 be set aside for matching funds for at least six façade improvements.

Upon on a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Fawbush, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – Caruso, council moved to fund \$45,000 from unappropriated reserves for the Downtown Storefront Improvement Program, approve a budget amendment for the same, and authorized the city manager to execute contracts with property owners investing in the Downtown Façade Improvement Program.

Next, an update on the initial funding offer from the Office of Drinking Water for Phase II of the Clear Creek and Josephine Waterline Replacement Projects were presented by the city manager.

The city manager stated the city’s application for water construction funds through the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Drinking Water was approved with qualifying factors. He said the funding package basically requires the city to be under contract in 12 months to receive 100 percent grant funding or the city would have to obtain a loan for Phase II of the waterline replacement projects. Mr. Ramey said city administration’s goal is to have the projects under contract in 12 months to receive full grant funding. He said he must respond to VDH in writing and inform the Office of Drinking Water which option council will commit to for the water construction funds.

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Council was of consensus to be under contract in 12 months to qualify for 100 percent grant funding for Phase II of the Clear Creek and Josephine Waterline Replacement Projects.

In council’s packets for their consideration was the city’s ordinance that established a Pump and Haul Sewer Resolution.

Mr. Ramey presented a brief PowerPoint presentation that explained the reason the Pump and Haul Sewer Resolution was established in 2013, he said the city’s ordinance requires a \$5,000 cash bond or a bank letter of credit to ensure the city is protected should a business stop using the pump and haul service, close, or abandon the location. Mr. Ramey said he was contacted by a representative of Cat Coal Mining Company and he asked if he could deposit \$5,000 with the city instead of doing a cash bond. He said city administration determined the request was reasonable since the city already requires meter deposits for water accounts and these funds could be deposited into the same city account. Mr. Ramey said, if council agrees, Mr. Bradshaw will prepare a draft ordinance amending Chapter 17, Section 7 of the City Code to allow the \$5,000 deposit into the city’s Water Liability Account and the item will be placed on council’s agenda for September 4th for council’s consideration and to authorize a public hearing on the proposed amendment.

262820

Mr. Bradshaw added the request is reasonable and a deposit with the city would be significantly easier to deal with as opposed to surety bond or cash bond should the business default on the permit. For full disclosure, Mr. Bradshaw informed council he has previously represented the permittee in legal matters.

Council was of consensus to amend Chapter 17, Section 7 of the City Code to allow the \$5,000 deposit into the city’s Water Deposit Account in lieu of a surety bond or cash bond.

Council had been presented with A Resolution to the Virginia General Assembly to Request a Plan and Adequate Funding for an Alternative Transportation System for Individuals Involved in the Civil Commitment Process and to Grant an Exemption for the Southwest Virginia Mental Health Institute from the “Place of Last Resort” Requirement Under the Current Law.

The city manager said this issue has been a concern for the police department and the Norton City Sheriff’s Department for years. He said the Town of Marion wrote a letter asking all localities in the Southwest Virginia Planning Districts to consider passing a similar resolution.

Police Chief Lane provided council with a broad overview of the Civil Commitment Process, via a PowerPoint presentation, stating that persons taken into custody may be detained for up to eight hours for evaluation before being transported to a hospital for additional evaluation. He said an officer has to sit with the individual during the entire evaluation process and pointed out that two officers are required for a transport.

262821

Sheriff Carlos Noaks shared his department’s experience with the Civil Commitment Process and stated improvement in the region is needed for persons and their families that have to undergo this process.

After brief discussion and upon motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution to the Virginia General Assembly to Request a Plan and Adequate Funding for an Alternative Transportation System for Individuals Involved in the Civil Commitment Process and to Grant an Exemption for the Southwest Virginia Mental Health Institute from the “Place of Last Resort” Requirement Under the Current Law. (Insert)

Council had one transfer to confirm. The transfer was to Norton City Schools, dated July 2, 2018, in the amount of \$682,350 to cover the General Obligation School Bond, Series 2012 payment.

262822

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the transfer to Norton City Schools as stated above.

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

262823

Mayor Mays declared council in executive session.

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

262824

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.

262825

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

Mayor Mays opened the floor for nominations to the Norton Social Services Advisory Board to fill the unexpired term of Dorie Stidham whose term expires August 5, 2020.

Councilman Fultz nominated Vicki Stidham to be appointed to fill the unexpired term.

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

Mayor Mays declared Vicki Stidham appointed to the Norton Social Services Advisory Board to fill the unexpired term of Dorie Stidham whose term expires August 5, 2020.

262826

Mayor Mays opened the floor for nominations to the Highway Safety Commission to fill the unexpired term of Fred McConnell whose term expires January 31, 2019.

Councilman Caruso nominated Steve McElroy to be appointed to fill the unexpired term.

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

Mayor Mays declared Steve McElroy appointed to the Highway Safety Commission to fill the unexpired term of Fred McConnell whose term expires January 31, 2019.

262827

In comments from the City Manager:

Mr. Ramey said he will be attending training in Roanoke at the time the September 18th council meeting. He asked council members to review their calendars and a decision can be made at the September 4th meeting on whether to cancel, reschedule or continue with the September 18th meeting, as scheduled.

He said the first High Knob Outdoor Festival was held in the Farmers' Market Building and he was pleased with the event. Mr. Ramey said the facility worked well for this type of festival and several outdoor recreation businesses and organizations participated.

Mr. Ramey said the AmeriCorps Team River 3 will arrive Wednesday, August 22nd, and will begin working on Thursday. He said to let him know if anyone wishes to sponsor the team for lunch.

He said copies of the August Retail Sales Tax Report have been placed at council's desk.

Mr. Ramey said several events are scheduled in September and October. He noted the Woodbooger Geocache is scheduled for Saturday, September 8th; the Woodbooger Festival is scheduled for Friday, October 5th and Saturday, October 6th; the High Knob Hellbender is scheduled Saturday, October 6th; and the Cloudsplitter 100 Ultra Trail Race is scheduled for Saturday, October 13th.

262828

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said he is very supportive of outdoor activities and the Farmers' Market Building is a great venue for events.

He stated he is pleased that several outdoor events are scheduled for September and October which will generate additional revenue for the city.

He then commented he is pleased the city is one payment closer to retiring the school debt.

262829

Councilman Caruso said Benges' Revenge Bicycle Race is scheduled for Sunday, September 9th.

He said at council's next workshop he would like to discuss the cleanup plan he emailed to members.

262830

He would like an update from the police department on crime within the city so council is aware of criminal activities in the community.

Councilman Fawbush said the 2018 Woodbooger Festival is a two-day event scheduled for Friday, October 5th, and Saturday, October 6th. He said on Friday several activities will be held in the Farmers' Market building and on Saturday the festival will conclude at the High Knob Recreation Area with games, a search for the Woodbooger, vending, and other activities.

262831

He noted he has been invited to Bays Mountain Bigfoot Conference and the Friends of Southwest Virginia has asked the Woodbooger to set up a table at the Bristol Rhythm and Roots Reunion scheduled in September. He added he is looking for volunteers and donations for this year's Woodbooger Festival.

Mayor Mays applauded the work occurring downtown.

262832


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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council