

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, October 16, 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, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – Fawbush, council moved to adopt the minutes of the September 27, 2018, meeting as presented. 262866

There was no response to the Mayor’s Call for Visitors. 262867

The city manager noted Section 8-38 of the State Code requires the fire chief present council with a list of working officers each fiscal year.

Chief Lagow was present and said there were no recommended changes to the list of officers appointed last year and he asked for council’s support in approving this group of volunteers for FY 2018-2019. 262868

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to approve the list of working officers for the Norton Fire Department for the fiscal year 2018-2019 as presented by Fire Chief Todd Lagow.

In packets for council consideration was a Resolution Approving the Planning District One (PD1) Community Services Board Performance Contract for FY 2019 and FY 2020.

Mr. Ramey said PD1’s contract is a two-year agreement and requires council’s approval. He noted PD1 Financial Officer Donna Stanley was in attendance and could answer any questions members may have regarding PD1’s biennial Performance Contract. 262869

Council members had no questions regarding the information provided in their packet, therefore upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt the Resolution Approving the Planning District One Behavioral Health Services Board Performance Contract for FY 2019 and FY 2020. (Insert)

The city manager said the city was approached in 2014 about rock climbing opportunities in the Flag Rock Recreation Area. He said at that time, city administration’s largest concern with permitting rock climbing in the Flag Rock Recreation Areas was potential liability. He said in 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed between the city and the Southwest Virginia Climbing Coalition (SVCC) which included SVCC’s goal for rock climbing in the area. Mr. Ramey said since the execution of the MOU, SVCC has changed its name to the Central Appalachia Climbers Coalition 262870

(CACC) and that he had asked Brad Mathisen, president of CACC, to provide council with an update on the activities of the organization.

Mr. Mathisen, via a PowerPoint presentation, presented photos and activities the coalition has been involved with over the past 3 ½ years. He said CACC has received national recognition due to the coalitions efforts to preserve property in the Grayson Highlands and that the coalition works with The Access Fund to receive national publication and recognition for the work CACC is doing in the region. He said CACC wants to begin publicizing climbing opportunities available within the city and to install signage at the trailheads. Mr. Mathisen stated in the near future he would like to discuss a management plan with council.

Mr. Ramey followed up by informing council that CACC had provided numerous documents for the city attorney to review regarding the liability aspect of rock climbing and that the organization had met each obligation in the MOU. Mr. Ramey said CACC will continue working with The Access Fund and that city administration is comfortable with opening the two rock climbing locations in the Flag Rock Recreation area once the certificate of insurance is received from The Access Fund and is approved by Mr. Bradshaw, signage is installed, and the activity is approved by council.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to authorize city administration to work with the Central Appalachia Climbing Coalition to develop a management plan, to install appropriate signage at the trailheads, and to allow rock climbing at “The Labyrinth” and “The Sanctuary” in the Flag Rock Recreation Area.

Council was presented with a resolution requesting Authorization to Submit a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HISP) Grant Application to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Mr. Ramey presented council with a PowerPoint presentation on a proposed sidewalk improvement project beginning at the corner of 12th Street, N.W., and leading up to the entrance of the former shopping center. He said a number of citizens are using the current sidewalk to access the newly renovated Healthplex owned by Norton Community Hospital and that the city is experiencing some sprawling in the cliff line and the sidewalk is not handicap accessible. Mr. Ramey said the HISP grant is very competitive and the estimated cost of the sidewalk improvement is \$300,000.

After a lengthy discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwomen Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Resolution Authorizing City Administration to Submit a Highway Safety Improvement Program Grant Application to the Virginia Department of Transportation. (Insert)

Mr. Ramey informed council that representatives of the Virginia Department of Transportation’s contacted him to advise they have applied internally for a Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions (STARS) Grant to study Park Avenue from Trent Street, N.E., to the entrance of Norton Community Hospital. He said the local VDOT office was awarded the STARS Grant which will allow VDOT to analyze and recommend safety projects, including cost and specifications, to improve the city’s main thoroughfare. Mr. Ramey said the evaluation of Park Avenue will be completely funded by VDOT’s STARS Grant and the grant will enable the city to use the data to apply for funding should council decide to implement any of the recommended projects.

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Council had one check to confirm. The check was to Municipal Emergency Services Depository Account dated August 10, 2018, in the amount of \$337,169.65, to cover the purchase of 24 self-contained breathing apparatus for the Norton Fire Department that were purchased with grant funds. 262873

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the check to Municipal Emergency Services Depository Account, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, 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 to consult with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (8) of the Code of Virginia, as amended. 262874

Mayor Mays declared council in closed meeting.

The city attorney was excused after the closed meeting. 262875

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to go back into open meeting. 262876

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. 262877

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, 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 Community Policy and Management Board for a four-year term to expire November 15, 2022.

Councilman Caruso nominated Delores Belcher to be reappointed to the Norton Community Policy and Management Board for a four-year term to expire November 15, 2022.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – Belcher, council moved that the nominations cease. 262878

Mayor Mays declared Delores Belcher reappointed to the Norton Social Services Advisory Board for a four-year term to expire November 15, 2022.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey advised the city has three areas that qualify for the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Program (PSAP) Grant and he would like council's authorization to apply. He said it doesn't appear that the grant requires a resolution by council to apply, but he would like council's authorization because of the upcoming due date. 262879

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwomen Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Resolution Authorizing City Administration to Submit an Application to the Virginia Department of Transportation's Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Program. (Insert)

Mr. Ramey said council authorized Norton City Schools to install banners at downtown intersections and the project is completed.

Also, a school resource officer has been assigned to Norton Elementary and Middle School and the position is working well.

The International Walk to School Day in the city was held Friday, October 12th.

Mr. Ramey provided an update on the High Knob Hellbender 10k Race and the Cloudsplitter 100 Ultra Trail Race.

He gave each council member a sample ballot for the November election, September traffic counts for Route 619 and Flag Rock Recreation Area, and the October Retail Sales Tax Report.

Mr. Ramey said the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) Community Coaching Summit will be held in the city October 29th-30th.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said he appreciated Brad Mathison's update and suggests a back story be constructed to connect The Labyrinth and the Stonehenge monument.

He said adding gravity trails to the city's trail system is a great idea.

Councilman Fultz commended the city's Trail Coordinator Shayne Fields and the AmeriCorps/National Civilian Conservation Corps Team River 3 for their work on the city's trail system.

He said the runners that participated in the Cloudsplitter that came to his aid station were very appreciative of the volunteers and he appreciates everyone who worked to make the event possible. Also, the Farmers' Market/Expo Center was a great staging location for this event.

Councilman Fultz said ideas are coming to fruition with the awarding of the grant for Project Intersection and the completion of the Destination Center will play a larger role than originally anticipated in growing tourism efforts in the High Knob Area.

The city will hold its annual Halloween Bash from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., Saturday, October 20th, at Norton City Park.

Councilman Caruso echoed Councilman Fultz's comments and said the Farmers' Market is one of the best facilities downtown.

Councilman Caruso said Mr. Ramey did an excellent job on the Cloudsplitter race and noted the race would not have happened without Mr. Ramey's efforts. He suggested next year the Tourism Committee should operate the booth at the Cloudsplitter race and he thanked local sponsors, volunteers, and Boy Scout Troop 301 and Scout Leader Teddy Huff.

He said he liked the back story for The Labyrinth.

Councilman Fultz added he would like to thank Spearhead Trails and the U.S. Forestry Department for their efforts on the Cloudsplitter race.

He also thought the participants in the Cloudsplitter race appreciated the city's involvement in the event.

Councilman Fawbush commended everyone involved in making the Cloudsplitter race a success.

He said he and other council members attended the annual Virginia Municipal League Conference (VML) held September 30th - October 2nd in Hampton, Virginia.

Councilman Fawbush said the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) received a \$900,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for Project Intersection.

He said the Woodbooger Festival went well with 246 adults and up to 150 kids attending the event on Saturday. He thanked the John I. Burton Ladies Tennis and Cross County Teams, Ridgeview High School Robotics Team, Boy Scout Troop 301 and Scout Leader Teddy Huff, the AmeriCorps Team River 3 participants, Mountain Empire Cryptic Research Organization, Bilco Productions, and city employees.

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He will be tabling October 20th at the Bigfoot Conference at Bays Mountain Park and Planetarium in Kingsport, Tennessee.

Councilman Fawbush said he is looking forward to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) Community Coaching Summit on October 29th- 30th.

He noted that on October 6th, Flag Rock Recreation Area had campers visiting from Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Councilman Fawbush said he was interviewed by a student from Radford University who is writing a paper on the Woodbooger phenomenon. He said she visited during the Woodbooger event and asked what was the purpose of the Woodbooger Festival. Councilman Fawbush said he told her purpose of the festival is to encourage people to go outdoors and visit High Knob.

Mayor Mays confirmed council members were in consensus for rescheduling the November 6, 2018, meeting due to the election.

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It was the consensus of council to reschedule the November 6, 2018, meeting to Tuesday, November 13, 2018.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council