

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, April 7, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Present: William Mays, Robert Fultz, Jr., Joseph Fawbush, Mark Caruso, and Delores Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager

The invocation was given by Councilman Fultz and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the March 17, 2020, as presented.

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

The city manager provided council with an update on COVID-19.

The city manager said the city's Emergency Management Team (EMT) has continued participating in calls with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, LENOWISCO Health District, and Wise County's Emergency Management Team. He said the city's EMT continues to meet to share updated information and he stated effective today city hall was closed to walk-in traffic. The city manager said offices will remain open during normal business hours and utility bills and taxes may be paid online, by mail, bank draft, or through the city's payment drop box outside the main entrance. He said if citizens should need new water service an account can be set up through fax or email, and anyone needing specific assistance is asked to call the office and appointments can be made for certain situations. He said the city has also set up a COVID-19 webpage for citizens who may have questions and information about the Small Business Assistance Program through the Small Business Administration (SBA). The city manager said he is asking council to ratify an Emergency Declaration and adopt an Emergency Ordinance to Effectuate Temporary Changes in Certain Deadlines, Modify Public Meeting and Public Hearing Practices and Procedures, Promote Economic Security, and Address Continuity of Operating Associated with the Pandemic Disaster. He stated he placed copies of both documents on member's desks, and on Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, the city's EMT moved forward with a Declaration of Emergency to position the city with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to ensure the receipt of medical equipment, to qualify for federal monies, to assure the ability to request state and federal resources, and ensure that local businesses will qualify for future stimulus money if any funds are made available. The city manager said the emergency ordinance will enact temporary changes and certain deadlines, modify meetings and public hearings, promote economic security, and uphold continuity of government associated with the pandemic. The city manager then highlighted key areas of the emergency ordinance, three of which address real estate tax penalty and delinquency rates, water and sewer bill penalties, and the creation of a stimulus program for small businesses. He said due to non-essential

small businesses closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency ordinance, in accordance with Virginia Code 58.1-3916 and City Code 23-2, the penalty and interest rates on delinquent real estate taxes will be set at zero and suspended as long as the emergency ordinance remains in effect. Also, in accordance with Virginia Code 15.2-2119 and City Code 25-52, the penalty for delinquent payment for water and sewer service charges will be set at zero and suspended for the duration of the emergency ordinance. The stimulus portion of the Emergency Ordinance includes a new Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program that creates a loan pool for businesses within the City of Norton. He said if council adopts the emergency ordinance, members would authorize the city manager to loan the Norton Industrial Development Authority funds from this grant that would go to sustain local businesses through the pandemic by paying their rent, utilities, and other expenses. The city manager said the loan program is a local COVID-19 stimulus loan program titled "Norton Strong." The city manager told council he contacted the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA/RD) for approval of the loan program and received consent to move forward with using the funds as a loan pool for local businesses due to the pandemic. He said the emergency ordinance would remain in effect for 60 days unless council acted otherwise.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt the Emergency Declaration declaring a public health emergency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt the Emergency Ordinance to Effectuate Temporary Changes in Certain Deadlines, Modify Public Meeting and Public Hearing Practices and Procedures, Promote Economic Security, and Address Continuity of Operating Associated with the Pandemic Disaster. (Insert)

At this time, Mayor Fawbush asked council to amend the agenda to include under Item 6-E-1 A Resolution of Support for the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

It was the consensus of council to amend the agenda to include under Item 6-E-1 the resolution, as stated above.

Council was presented with a resolution authorizing a Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – Office of Drinking Water's Water Supply Assistance Grant Application for the Southside Community Waterline Replacement Project – Phase I.

Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, displayed the area of the Southside Community that is included in the proposed waterline replacement. He told council the Southside Project is a large project that includes demolition and modification of structures and there is not enough money in the Proposed Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) submitted to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to also replace the waterlines in the Southside Community. So, the city manager asked for council's authorization to submit an application to VDH for the Southside Community Waterline Replacement Project.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt a resolution authorizing the city manager to

submit a Water Supply Assistance Grant Application to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – Office of Drinking Water’s Water Supply Assistance Grant Application for the Southside Community Waterline Replacement Project – Phase I. (Insert)

In their packets, council had been presented with A Resolution Proclaiming April 12-18, 2020, as National Public Safety 9-1-1 Telecommunicators Week.

Mr. Ramey advised that city’s dispatch center had answered 4,780 – 911 calls and 29,425 non-emergency calls in 2019 and the city would like to recognize their efforts.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Resolution Proclaiming April 12-18, 2020, as the National Public Safety 9-1-1 Telecommunicators Week in the City of Norton. (Insert)

Also included in council packets was A Resolution Proclaiming the Month of April 2020 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in the City of Norton.

Mr. Ramey said each year Norton Social Services tries to draw attention to child abuse and remind citizens what can be done as prevention.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution Proclaiming the Month of April 2020 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in the City of Norton.

A Resolution Declaring the Month of April 2020 as Autism Awareness Month and April 2, 2020, as World Autism Day in the City of Norton was included in council packets for council members’ consideration.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Resolution Declaring the Month of April 2020 as Autism Awareness Month and April 2, 2020, as World Autism Day in the City of Norton. (Insert)

Presented in council’s packets was A Resolution of Support for the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

Mr. Ramey said in 2019 Wise County/City of Norton and the City of Alexandria, Virginia were paired by Governor Ralph Northam in a Local Government Challenge Program through a partnership with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VHCD), Virginia Association of Counties (VAC), and the Virginia Municipal League (VML). He said Mayor Fawbush, Councilman Fultz, and he had the opportunity to attend an event at the governor’s mansion in February and they met with officials from the City of Alexandria. Mr. Ramey said he and Wise County Administrator Mike Hatfield had a conference call today to discuss COVID-19 and the challenges each community is facing. Mr. Ramey said at Councilman Caruso’s suggestion, Councilman Fultz drafted a resolution in support of the City of Alexandria to let citizens and administration know that the residents and officials of Norton extend thoughts and prayers to city council, staff, and the great people of Alexandria.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution of Support for the City of Alexandria, Virginia. (Insert)

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to go into closed meeting for Personnel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1), and for the Discussion or Consideration of the Acquisition of Real Property for a Public Purpose, or of the Disposition of Publicly 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.

Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

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

Mayor Fawbush 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 unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said Mayor Fawbush has recorded a public service announcement to inform citizens of actions council has taken to protect citizens and local businesses. Mr. Ramey then played the video for members and advised that the video would be placed on NMAC.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said he appreciates the comradery between council members and the advance work performed in preparation for tonight's meeting by city administration, the mayor, and vice mayor.

He said he enjoys being part of making a positive difference.

Councilwoman Belcher echoed Councilman Fultz's comments and added that she is thankful for the city's first responders and hospital employees.

Councilman Mays reiterated Councilman Fultz's and Councilwoman Belcher's statements.

Councilman Caruso thanked city administration for preparing the documents needed for tonight's meeting. He said the city has assembled the best team to ensure citizens' needs are met and daily operations are maintained as much as possible, all while lessening risk and ensuring people are safe and doing the right thing. He said "Norton Strong" is a perfect slogan and he is proud to be part of the leadership team.

Mayor Fawbush echoed council's comments and thanked Mr. Ramey, city administration, and all employees that work for the city, and added that Norton is very fortunate to have every employee that works for the city. Mayor Fawbush asked the city manager to inform the

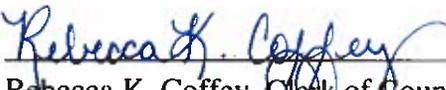
department heads and employees that he is very appreciative of them. He noted that he is proud of the city's strong organization and said Norton will get through the pandemic

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA

  
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Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council