

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, April 21, 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 Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the April 7, 2020, as presented.

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

The city manager, via a PowerPoint presentation, provided council with a timeline of city and state responses that began March 12, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The city manager said the governor declared a state of emergency on March 12th to prepare and coordinate the state's response to the potential spread of COVID-19. The Virginia Emergency Operation Plan and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Center were then activated and \$10,000,000 was authorized for state and local governments for response operations to the pandemic. He then shared the governor's actions over the next several weeks that included school closures, over 10-person gathering ban, statewide closure of non-essential businesses, and a temporary stay-at-home order through June 10th. The city manager said the city took action by declaring a local economic and public health emergency, closing city hall to walk-in traffic, ratifying an Emergency Declaration and adopting an Emergency Ordinance, removal of penalties and interest on real estate taxes and penalties on water bills, the authorization of a loan pool through the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA) for small city businesses, and adopted a resolution of support for the City of Alexandria. He told council that NIDA has closed on 36 small business loan applications totaling \$177,500 and that most businesses were viewing the loan as a line of credit.

Mayor Fawbush thanked the city manager for the update.

In packets for council consideration was an updated Law Enforcement Transfer of Custody Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Between Planning District One Wise County Behavioral Health Services Crisis Intervention Therapeutic Assessment Center and various law enforcement agencies and the Norton Police Department

Chief Lane informed council that the only differences are that three more police departments are participating in the program and wording was added to provide additional services. Chief Lane noted that he has not received any negative communication about the program and he doesn't have any issues with it.

The city manager told council that the city attorney has reviewed and approved the MOA.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to authorize the city manager and Chief Lane to execute the Memorandum of Agreement Between Planning District One Wise County Behavioral Health

Services Crisis Intervention Therapeutic Assessment Center and various law enforcement agencies and the Norton Police Department.

The next agenda item was the discussion of a modified budget schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Ramey gave council members a proposed FY21 Budget schedule for review and discussion for the purpose of adopting the city budget prior to the June 30th deadline. He said the auditors will present the FY19 Audit at the May 5th council meeting and city administration will have a list of encumbrances for council review. Mr. Ramey said council will need to authorize the city manager to schedule a public hearing for the May 19th meeting. Mr. Ramey said Norton City Schools will present the school system's FY21 Budget, encumbrances, and surplus, if any, on May 19th. He suggested council schedule a work session prior to the June meetings. Mr. Ramey said council will hold a public hearing at the June 2nd council meeting for the school's budget and consider any budget amendments and surplus funds discussed at the previous meeting. City administration will also present the city's FY21 Budget at the June 2nd meeting.

At this time, Councilwoman Belcher stepped out of the meeting.

After a brief discussion, council was of the consensus to schedule a work session at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, May 23rd, in the Municipal Council Chambers.

Councilwoman Belcher took her seat back on council and concurred with members on the scheduled work session.

In packets for council consideration was a transfer from the city's Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) to the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA) account: Norton Strong: Small Business Assistance Program, dated April 14, 2020, in the amount of \$310,000, for the purpose of establishing a small business assistance program.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the transfer to the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA) account: Norton Strong: Small Business Assistance Program, as stated above.

Mayor Fawbush advised Agenda Item 6-E, Closed Meeting for Personnel as Per Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia was tabled.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey told council that the roof replacement at the Community Center is almost completed.

Mr. Ramey said the Best Friend Festival (BFF) came up with three options for this year's festival and the committee would like council's opinion on the options: Option 1 – Keep the festival in June but shorten the event; Option 2 – Move the festival to July 4th weekend and coincide with the fireworks display; Option 3 – Move the festival to August before going back to school.

Council was of the consensus to ask the BFF Committee to review July 3rd for possible collaboration with the Independence Day Celebration and fireworks display.

Mr. Ramey said he expects the Route 74 Paving Project, Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) Intersection Project, and the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Highwall Removal Projects to start soon.

He placed the February Retail Sales Tax Report at member's desks.

Mr. Ramey told council he placed copies of an email regarding a citizen's appreciation of funding the Lonesome Pine Regional Library.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Mays said that Family Crisis Support Center is having financial difficulty due to the inability to draw down funding. He asked the city manager to contact the director to discuss drawing down the city's FY21 appropriation.

Council was in consensus to have the city manager contact the director of Family Crisis Support Services to discuss advancing the FY21 funding.

Councilman Caruso asked the city manager to give an update on casino legislation in Virginia.

Mr. Ramey said Delegate Terry Kilgore told him it was not the intent to leave the Norton out of the wording and at the next General Assembly session they will make every effort to get the document modified to include the City of Norton in the running. Mr. Ramey said the General Assembly is looking at least a two-year timeline before a casino is a possibility so there is ample time to make the correction.

Councilman Caruso asked everyone to pass out the 2020 Census form and encouraged everyone to complete the form or go online to complete the form. He said our region is behind in completing the Census.

Mayor Fawbush said he received a letter from the aide of Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson, along with a copy of the resolution, adopted April 14th by the City of Alexandria which was similar to the resolution Norton passed in support of Alexandria during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Fawbush said a leadership meeting between council and the school board will be held in May and council will have a work session on Saturday, May 23rd.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council