

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, May 5, 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, and Jeffery Shupe, Finance Director

The invocation was given by Councilman and Pastor Robert Fultz and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Finance Director Jeffery Shupe.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Belcher, Fawbush NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the April 21, 2020, meeting as presented.

During the Mayor's Call for Visitors, Mr. Al Stecker, 305 Poplar Street, N.W., spoke briefly to council regarding the prolonged closure of a portion of Ridge Avenue due to movement and a bulge in the stone wall that runs along a portion of Ridge Avenue to Craig Street.

Mr. Stecker said the city has studied the Ridge Avenue wall for four years and it is still standing since the original concern was brought to council's attention. He said over the past four years, the city has received the most rainfall to date and has received almost 28 inches of rainfall this year. He noted that the city opened Craig Street last fall to see what impact vehicle traffic would have on the wall and it is still standing. Mr. Stecker stated traffic has increased on Chestnut Street and Poplar Street, and that vehicles use his driveway as a pass through between Craig Street and Poplar Street on a regular basis. He said it is a real inconvenience and frustrating to residents for that portion of Ridge Avenue to be closed to traffic. Mr. Stecker told council the city should have already received the engineer's report on measurements taken in March of this year and that residents would like for council to make a decision on the wall and opening the road.

Ms. Tamara Greear of Rodefer Moss and Company, P.L.L.C., was present to give council copies of the city's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Internal Control Related Report for the year ending June 30, 2019, and to provide an overview of the audit findings.

Ms. Greear advised council that the city received a clean opinion and there were no findings or exceptions to the report. She said the city's internal controls were audited and the report contains two material findings, adding that the bulk of the findings from last year have been corrected. Ms. Greear then provided excerpts from the audit utilizing PowerPoint to give council an overview of the General Operating, Enterprise, Social Services, and Norton City Schools funds. When reviewing the Enterprise Fund, Ms. Greear told council the account showed an increase of funds in the amount of \$269,325 which is indicative of water rate increases and reflects council is working toward a positive net position in the Enterprise Fund. Ms. Greear informed council the city ended the FY19 Budget Year with a total surplus of \$381,314.40 and as June 30th the General Fund's Fund Balance was \$3,154,117. She said overall the city's surplus funds totaled \$603,846, which includes an audited surplus from Norton City Schools in the amount of \$213,304.

Following the overview, Ms. Greear answered a few questions from council members and Mayor Fawbush thanked Ms. Greear for her audit presentation.

The next agenda item was an update on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The city manager updated council with a PowerPoint presentation on the history of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth and locally. He then provided council with a handout that informs how Virginia will move forward with easing public health restrictions, and the Virginia Department of Health's (VDH) number of COVID-19 cases in Virginia. The city manager said the governor wants to continue monitoring to ensure that COVID-19 cases are decreasing in the Commonwealth, hospitals are not becoming overloaded, and there is an increased availability of personal protection equipment (PPE). He said the city's emergency management team continues to participate in conference calls with health authorities and he updated council on citizen payment methods and the "Norton Strong" business loan program. The city manager told council the city is offering a new online payment service for real estate and personal property taxes, and water bills through MuniPay. He noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic citizens will not have to pay the convenience fee to use this service, but once council removes the Emergency Declaration, citizens will be charged a convenience fee if they wish to continue using the online payment service. The city manager then showed council a sample "Norton Strong" banner that was discussed at the previous council meeting. It was the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to purchase two sizes of the banners for various locations downtown.

The city manager then advised council he reached out to Rick Colley, executive director of the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce, as previously directed by council and discussed the possibility of joining a portion of the activities from the Best Friend Festival (BFF) with the fireworks display. Mr. Colley said the BFF Committee believes they can provide some activities for the Fourth, but they are concerned at this point about securing vendors and volunteers. After a lengthy discussion, it was the consensus of council to move forward with planning the BFF activities and the Independence Day fireworks display for July 3rd – 4th, with a possible rain date of July 5th.

Mr. Ramey said city administration applied last year for a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA/RD) to purchase two emergency vehicles for the police department. He said the city has been awarded a loan/grant package from USDA/RD that will assist in purchasing the vehicles but a public hearing is required before loan approval. Mr. Ramey asked council's authorization to advertise the required public hearing at the May 19th meeting.

It was the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to advertise a public hearing for the May 19th meeting to purchase two emergency vehicles for the police department using a loan/grant package from the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development.

Council had been presented with a Code of Conduct related to loan/grant package from United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA/RD).

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt the Code of Conduct related loan/grant from USDA/RD for purchase of emergency vehicles.

Included in packets for council consideration was a transfer to Norton City Schools, dated April 24, 2020, in the amount of \$200,000.00 to cover April payroll expenditures.

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

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, and Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to go into closed meeting for Personnel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia, as amended.

Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

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

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations to the Wise County/City of Norton Youth Services Board for a four-year term to expire May 2, 2024.

Councilman Mays nominated Robert Fultz, Jr., to be reappointed to the Wise County/City of Norton Youth Services Board for a four-year term to expire May 2, 2024.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Robert Fultz, Jr., to be reappointed to the Wise County/City of Norton Youth Services Board for a four-year term to expire May 2, 2024.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations of a student representative to the Wise County/City of Norton Youth Services Board for a four-year term to expire May 2, 2024.

Councilman Fultz nominated Shamiyeh Noel to be appointed as a student representative to the Wise County/City of Norton Youth Services Board for a four-year term to expire May 2, 2024.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Shamiyeh Noel to be appointed as a student representative to the Wise County/City of Norton Youth Services Board for a four-year term to expire May 2, 2024.

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

Vice Mayor Caruso opened the floor for nominations to the Coeburn-Norton-Wise (C-N-W) Regional Wastewater Authority for a four-year term to expire May 15, 2024.

Councilman Fultz nominated Joseph Fawbush to be reappointed to the C-N-W Regional Wastewater Authority for a four-year term to expire May 15, 2024.

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

Vice Mayor Caruso declared Joseph Fawbush to be reappointed to the C-N-W Regional Wastewater Authority for a four-year term to expire May 15, 2024.

Vice Mayor Caruso turned the meeting back over to Mayor Fawbush.

Mayor Fawbush asked for nominations to the 2020 Virginia Municipal League Policy Committee.

Councilwoman Belcher nominated the list of candidates as recommended by the city manager to the 2020 Virginia Municipal League Policy Committee. The list included: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., - Community and Economic Development Committee; Andrew Greear – Environmental Quality Committee; Jeff Shupe – Finance Committee; William Bradshaw – General Laws Committee; Gina Wohlford – Human Development and Education Committee; and Steve McElroy – Transportation Committee.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared the list of candidates recommended by the city manager, as noted above, to be reappointed to the 2020 Virginia Municipal League Policy Committee.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said he and Mayor Fawbush met with Norton Community Hospital (NCH) representatives to discuss a local action the city could take to aid the hospital in recovering more funding from the Medicaid Supplemental Payment Program. Mr. Ramey said the city attorney is currently reviewing the request, and if approved, Mark Leonard Norton Community Hospital Chief Executive Officer will present a formal request to council and provide an overview of the entire program. Mr. Ramey said NCH may want to change the rate and the deadline is June 30th.

Mr. Ramey informed council the city's Blasting Ordinance may need to be modified or the blasting requirement removed completely for Project Intersection to move forward. He said the current blasting regulations are outdated but council may want to keep the mining restrictions.

Mr. Ramey said Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has begun milling and paving Route 74.

He told council that Norton City Schools plan to present the FY21 Budget at the May 19th meeting.

Mr. Ramey said he expects the contractor for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) Grant to begin working downtown within the next two weeks.

He also said the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Highwall Removal Project is anticipated to start soon.

Mr. Ramey told council he provided members with copies of the latest monthly financials and reminded members of council's workshop scheduled at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, May 23rd.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Caruso asked the city manager when the engineer would provide the information on the Ridge Avenue stacked stone wall.

Mr. Ramey said he requested the information the middle of April and he expects to receive it any time.

Councilman Caruso said the Leadership Team Meeting between the city and school system is scheduled for Wednesday, May 6th.

Mayor Fawbush said the city received the official Resolution of Support adopted by the city council of the City of Alexandria and a letter from Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson.

Mayor Fawbush shared with council that there will be a Leadership Team Meeting Wednesday, May 6th, Norton City Schools will present the FY21 Budget May 19th, council will have a budget work session Saturday, May 23rd, and council has meetings scheduled June 2nd, June 16th, and June 30th.

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