

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, August 4, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Council Members Present: William Mays, Robert Fultz, Jr., Joseph Fawbush, and Mark Caruso

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

Absent: Delores Belcher

The invocation was given by Councilman Robert Fultz and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Fire Chief Todd Lagow.

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

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

Council had been presented with a request for a Revocable Special Use Permit to allow the placement of tables and chairs and a free-standing sign on city property at 736 Park Avenue, N.W.

Blake Salyer told council that Lincoln Road Coffee House will be opening a coffee lounge and sharing the space at 736 Park Avenue, N.W., with current tenant Zest Catering. Via PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Salyer showed council the coffee lounge would like to place some tables and seating on the sidewalk and a movable "curbside pickup" sign in the parking space in front of the business. He explained that the coffee lounge is competing with business with drive-thru service and this is the only way for the lounge to match the drive-thru service.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to permit two 15 minute parking spaces and two bistro style tables and four chairs on the sidewalk in front of 736 Park Avenue, N.W., and authorized the city manager to prepare a Revocable Special Use Permit for the two requests and to have two "15 minute" parking signs installed in front of 736 Park Avenue, N.W.

The next agenda item was an annual update from Norton Rescue Squad (NRS) by Chief Operating Officer (COO) Todd Lagow.

Prior to Mr. Lagow's update, the city manager discussed statistical data, using the 2019 NRS tax return, stating the number of rescue calls for 2019 had slightly increased while BINGO proceeds had not seen an increase as in past revenue levels. The city manager told council that NRS operating expenses and total revenues have remained steady for 2019.

Mr. Lagow thanked Buddy Cash and his team and the NRS Board of Directors for placing the rescue squad in a better financial position. He said the squad began using a new billing company from Paducah, Kentucky, and that better documentation of transports has given the billing company the ability to increase the squad's revenue. Mr. Lagow noted Wise County increased the rescue squad's appropriation from \$15,000 to \$28,000 and that this additional funding was very helpful. Mr. Lagow said the rescue squad is also trying to cut fixed expenses such as outdoor lighting and they are in the process of changing the 20-year-old BINGO

machine. He said BINGO revenues will be short approximately \$40,000 this year due to COVID-19. Mr. Lagow said the squad did some renovations to the house located at the squad building to accommodate crews and that the squad received an 80 percent state grant with a local required match of \$25,000 to replace three heart monitors that will no longer be supported due to hospitals upgrade from 3G. He said the squad is looking at replacing ceiling tiles, doors, heating and cooling system, training equipment, and garage doors. Mr. Lagow stated that Norton Rescue Squad has not turned over any calls since 2018, and that as many as 15 personnel have arrived for a cardiac arrest. He also noted that Norton Police Department is also very helpful being the first to arrive on the scene.

On behalf of council, Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Lagow, Mr. Cash, and the employees and volunteers of NRS for their efforts and stated that their service is a tremendous asset to the citizens of Norton.

Included in council's packets was a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Norton and the City of Bristol, Virginia, on behalf of the Division 4 Technical Rescue Team.

Mr. Todd Lagow said the City of Bristol operates the regional Division 4 Technical Rescue Team and that the city does not have enough members from its various rescue teams to provide enough staff for the Technical Rescue Team to service the region when needed. So, the City of Bristol has opened up the Technical Rescue Team to departments within the area that have people who are qualified. Currently, Billy Mays is training with the City of Bristol's Division 4 Technical Rescue Team and they would like to make him operational for deployment with additional training and equipment. Mr. Lagow said the MOU allows the governing bodies to work together and states that the City of Bristol will provide training, equipment, maintenance, and deployment, and that the City of Norton is responsible for having reimbursement paperwork submitted within 72 hours of returning from deployment and the city will ensure that personnel maintain minimum training standards.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Norton and the City of Bristol, Virginia, on behalf of the Division 4 Technical Rescue Team.

The city manager provided an update on the funds received from the Commonwealth of Virginia provided by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 and city administration's plans for the use of the relief funds.

Mr. Ramey provided a highlight on the history of the CARES Act of 2020, and the number of programs the act has provided due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city received initial funding in the amount of \$347,327, from the CARES Act and in order to expend these monies certain qualifying conditions must be met with respect to the coronavirus. He said city administration has held off expending the funds to see if the federal government would allow localities to use the funds for lost revenue due to COVID-19 and because the future of the pandemic is unknown. Mr. Ramey said Governor Ralph Northram released the second half of the CARES Act funding last week and that city administration is requesting approval from council to authorize city administration to apply for the second round of funding in the same amount of \$347,327.

Mayor Fawbush asked the city manager if he was asking for council's recommendation on how to spend the CARES Act funds.

The city manager said that city administration can process funds as city council deems best but city administration is trying to be creative and would like to help small businesses.

Mayor Fawbush said he received notice that Old Dominion Power is disconnecting delinquent electrical services in August and that he would like for the funding to be put back in the community.

Councilman Caruso added that small businesses and citizens are our priority.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – Belcher, council moved to authorize city administration to apply for the second half of funding from the CARES Act of 2020 in the amount of \$347,327.

Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, provided council with an update on the downtown revitalization project and gave an overview of ongoing projects.

Mr. Ramey showed that the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) work is almost completed and said the project is now in the phase of milling and paving the downtown intersections and the next step will be striping. He told council that the city will not be installing the former red brick pavers because the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) indicated that white striping is more visible to vehicular traffic. Mr. Ramey noted that 11 storefronts have made façade improvements for a total investment of \$548,996.21 in the downtown with the city contributing \$67,160. He said the first wayfaring sign has been installed and the remaining signs will be installed within the next few weeks. Mr. Ramey said the eastern gateway enhancements at Dairy Queen have started with the installation of a new sidewalk with antique street lighting to be added with a welcome wall to be installed near the intersection as you come from Tipple Hill. He said other streetscapes will be done with grant funds and the rest will be installed by city employees. Mr. Ramey said city administration will concentrate first on installing the antique street lights on the north side of downtown from Route 74 to Wolfe, Williams and Reynolds law office then from Dairy Queen to Wise Hardware. He said no trees will be planted on the south side where Wise Hardware is located because the sidewalk is much narrower. Then the contractor will help with the entrance to the Fas mart Shamrock Gas Station to decrease the impact construction will have on their business. Next the 900 block area will be completed to tie in with the rest of downtown.

Mayor Fawbush said he is glad to see the progress continuing downtown.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a transfer to Norton City Schools, dated June 26, 2020, in the amount of \$300,000 to cover June payroll expenditures.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Mays, 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 Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – Belcher, 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 Mays, 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 Councilman Mays, 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 Black Diamond Rural Conservation Development Council for a two-year term to expire July 1, 2022.

Councilman Caruso nominated Adam Wells to be reappointed to the Black Diamond Rural Conservation Development Council for a two-year term to expire July 1, 2022.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Adam Wells reappointed to the Black Diamond Rural Conservation Development Council, as stated above.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey distributed a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Norton and the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA) at the request of the funding agency to reduce in writing the mutual covenants and agreements between the two parties regarding the High Knob Destination Center. Mr. Ramey gave an overview of the mutual goals and objectives between the city and NIDA.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Norton and the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA) regarding the High Knob Destination Center and to authorize Mayor Fawbush to execute the MOU.

Mr. Ramey said he provided council with copies of the latest High Knob and Flag Rock Recreation Area traffic counts.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz noted that Norton City Schools open tomorrow and that Norton is the first school division to reopen in the state since March 13th. He said school administration has worked diligently to put a plan in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Councilman Caruso congratulated school administration for getting the school system ready to open and for being the first school division in the state to open. He said it is not a small undertaking mentally or physically to open schools and it takes courage to do what the system is doing.

Councilman Fultz added that the school parents he has talked with said the cost of not going to school is greater than the risk of going.

Mayor Fawbush reminded council that the MIA/POW Memorial dedication will be at noon on Saturday, August 8th and he hopes members can attend.

Mayor Fawbush said the city has a lot of volunteers that work throughout the city and council needs to recognize them for their service.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of council to think through how to structure the recognition process.

Mayor Fawbush told members that he also thinks downtown businesses need to be recognized for being part of our community and for being downtown.

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