

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, August 18, 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, Mark Caruso, and Delores Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, and Jeffery L. Shupe, Finance Director

Absent: None

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

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – Belcher, council moved to adopt the minutes of the August 4, 2020, meeting as presented with a correction on page 3, second paragraph to read wayfinding instead of wayfarer.

During the Mayor's Call for Visitors, Michael Hunt, 226 Chestnut Street, N.W., spoke to council about the water issue on Chestnut Street particularly behind his mother's house. Mr. Hunt informed council that his family is in the process of selling the house and the basement floods when it rains. Mr. Hunt said, as council is aware, this has been a water issue for many years and he understands that repair is estimated to cost millions. He asked council if the city could seek grant funding to assist in correcting the water problem.

The city manager advised the city had previously applied for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding for the stormwater issue, but did not qualify, adding that the project could not be performed in phases because it would be moving the water issue from one place to the next. Mr. Ramey said the stormwater issue on Chestnut Street is on the city's Capital Improvement Projects list each year and council considers the project annually. Mr. Ramey suggested that the city clean out the ditch again behind his mother's residence to see if doing so will alleviate some of the stormwater issue.

Mr. Hunt said he would appreciate the city working on the ditch in the back of the home, and he also asked council to address the vacant lot next to his mother's property. He said the lot is overgrown and harbors rodents and racoons.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Hunt and asked him to tell his neighbors that the city continues to look for a solution to the stormwater issue plaguing Chestnut Street.

Council had been presented with a request from Gold Award Scout Candidate Angela Nauss of Girl Scout Troop 1066 for authorization for a proposed Girl Scout Community Project to illuminate the flag pole in Flag Rock Recreation Area.

Ms. Nauss spoke briefly to council about lighting the flag pole in Flag Rock Recreation Area explaining that she would like to use solar lights that can illuminate up to 60 feet for 12 hours. She said she will be selling bumper stickers to raise money to fund the project which it is expected to cost less than \$500.

Ms. Nauss then addressed questions from council, and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to authorize

Gold Award Scout Candidate Angela Nauss to proceed with her project to illuminate the flag pole at Flag Rock in Flag Rock Recreation Area.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Ms. Nauss for taking the initiative to light the flag pole at Flag Rock Recreation Area.

The next agenda item was consideration of an Interagency Agreement that will be used as part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) to fund the LENOWISCO Regional Small Business Recovery Assistance Grant Program.

Mr. Ramey told council the recently discussed LENOWISCO Regional Small Business Recovery Assistance Grant Application to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for a regional project representing the counties of Wise, Scott, and Lee, and the City of Norton will probably be available for funding in approximately two weeks. He said the city was asked to be the fiscal agent for the project and the grant requires an Interagency Agreement between the fiscal agent (the city) and the applicants (the counties). Mr. Ramey said a template of an Interagency Agreement was included in packets for council review and he is requesting that council approve of the template agreement as presented with any associated duplicate document for each county.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to approve the template Interagency Agreement as presented along with any associated duplicate document for each county.

Included in council packets for review was a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Norton and the United Way of Southwest Virginia (United Way) for the purpose of expediting services for disaster recovery associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019.

Mr. Ramey said, during the early days of COVID-19, United Way of Southwest Virginia stepped up and invested disaster relief funds in programs in their service area. He distributed a flyer indicating the amount United Way had invested in the area and specifically noted the \$10,000 to Norton Department of Social Services for a food assistance program. Mr. Ramey said United Way is also investing in WIFI hotspots throughout the area for educational purposes to assist students with virtual learning. He said United Way recently learned that the agency could potentially recover up to 70 percent of the disaster relief funds spent through FEMA by showing that the agency had spent disaster relief funds during the pandemic. Mr. Ramey said this MOU will assist United Way in their reimbursement effort from FEMA and that the city attorney and the city's Emergency Management Coordinator Todd Lagow have reviewed and approved the MOU.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote, YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Norton and the United Way of Southwest Virginia for the purpose of expediting services for disaster recovery associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019.

The city manager provided an update on the funds spent from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 and city administration's plans moving forward.

Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, presented council with a list of qualifying expenses that were necessary expenditures incurred due to COVID-19 and were not covered in

the budget. He told council that the expenditures must have occurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020, and that the funds must be applied to specific expenses. Mr. Ramey stated that the city has received both installments of the CARES Act funding and up until recently city administration's plan was to hold the funds to see if localities could use the revenue to replace lost revenue, cover all direct city expenses, and spend cautiously to ensure funding would be available to address future issues. He said to date the city has expended \$125,750 in COVID-19 expenditures. Mr. Ramey said CARES Act payments have included partner organizations Norton City Schools, Norton Rescue Squad, and Family Crisis Support Services. He said the schools initiated working with the city to get broad band hotspots at five city parks for virtual education for city students. Mr. Ramey said the city will pay for the hard costs of fiber, etc., and the school system will prepay for services. He said future CARES Act payments will go toward business type grants, and city administration is working with department heads to make sure the city is meeting the Labor Department building modification requirements. The city is also looking into Information Technology (IT) upgrades and phone system enhancements so employees can telework from home if necessary.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Ramey for the update and noted that he is glad the funds are being reinvested back into the community.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a transfer to Norton City Schools, dated July 6, 2020, in the amount of \$710,075 to cover General Obligation School Bond, Series 2012 payment.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, 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 Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Caruso, Fawbush, 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 Department of Social Services Board for a four-year term to expire August 5, 2024.

Councilwoman Belcher nominated Vicki Stidham to be reappointed to the Department of Social Services Board for a four-year term to expire August 5, 2024.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Vicki Stidham reappointed to the Department of Social Services Board, as stated above.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said the city's two Smartscale grant applications were formally submitted and the city should hear within the next year if the applications have been approved.

Mr. Ramey told council that Mr. Swanson, who had requested to use the city's Woodbooger service mark for a story competition, did not win, but he wanted to provide council with a copy of the story.

Mr. Ramey stated that he provided council members with two face masks or buffs that read "Get Outside in Norton", and he noted that all city employees received these face masks. He said the city will order additional face masks that will read "Norton Strong."

Mr. Ramey informed council that the city will be receiving another AmeriCorps Team River 5 soon.

Mr. Ramey said the Cloudsplitter 100 Ultra Trail Race is planned for October 17th and 18th. He said Susan Howell said modifications will be made for COVID-19, and that 95 participants have registered representing 21 states.

Mr. Ramey said the High Knob Hellbender race and the half marathon are still scheduled for this fall.

Mr. Ramey distributed copies of the latest Retail Sales Tax Report.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said today marked the 10th day Norton City Schools have been in session. He noted that he is thankful to school administration for making it possible for schools to open.

Councilman Fultz said he received an email from Susan Howell regarding the aid station he directs. He said she said she could provide some mitigation and Councilman Fultz said he told Ms. Howell that his team could manage their aid station.

Councilwoman Belcher stated that she attended the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEO) meeting Monday, August 17th, and she reported that the Commonwealth has a shortfall of 2 billion and is paying out \$43 million weekly in unemployment benefits.

Councilman Caruso thanked everyone for doing great work and that the city is moving forward. He said the mitigation the city has in place for the COVID-19 pandemic is working. The COVID-19 cases in our area are manageable and the city and Wise County are a great place to live.

Councilman Caruso said he is thrilled with the Sales Tax Report.

Mayor Fawbush said that he and Councilman Mays attended the MIA/POW Memorial dedication held last Saturday in Veterans Park and the event went well and was well attended. He shared a picture of the dedication with council members and noted that Barbara Caruso initiated construction of the park 26 years ago. Mayor Fawbush said it was a very moving service and that the University of Virginia's College at Wise Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) was in attendance as well as 25 members of the Rolling Thunder, Inc., Chapter 4 of Tennessee.

Mayor Fawbush said Hagy and Fawbush Funeral Home had 12-18 inches of rain in the funeral home garage and that several items costing several hundred dollars had to be thrown away. He said he understands the city cannot afford to repair the storm drainage system but the city needs to continue working on finding a solution for the downtown stormwater drainage problem.

Mayor Fawbush said council needs to discuss in the future a popup vendor ordinance, a sidewalk ordinance, and potentially a yard sale ordinance. He said these matters were brought to his attention a week ago and he is asking members to be thinking about these topics to discuss at a later date.

Mr. Ramey said at one time council had discussions regarding downtown yard sales, but if council approved members could have the Planning Commission could research the ordinances of other localities to see how other municipalities are handling these issues.

Mayor Fawbush said he does want council to discuss these items and the Planning Commission could research ordinances of other localities.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Ramey for the face masks he provided to council members.

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