

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, September 1, 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 Delores Belcher

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

Absent: Councilman Mark Caruso

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 Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – Caruso, council moved to adopt the minutes of the August 18, 2020, meeting as presented.

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

Before council opened new business, Mr. Ramey introduced the city's new Community Development Specialist and City Engineer Stephen L. McElroy. Mr. Ramey said he is pleased to have Mr. McElroy in this new position and believes he will be an asset to the city.

On behalf of council, Mayor Fawbush welcomed Mr. McElroy to the city team.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, the city manager provided an update on the LENOWISCO Regional Small Business Recovery Assistance Program (RSBRA).

The city manager said council packets included a draft application and program design for the RSBRA and since packets were delivered to members, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has approved the SBRA documents and the \$1.6 million grant funds. The city manager said he provided council with an updated copy of the RSBRA application and is requesting that council approve the latest application and program design and authorize the mayor and city manager to sign any and all documents related to the LENOWISCO Regional Small Business Recovery Assistance Program. The city manager added that city administration started advertising the RSBRA grant funds on the city's website and he is calling businesses that participated in the "Norton Strong" program.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwomen Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to approve the application and authorized the mayor and city manager to execute all and any documents related to the LENOWISCO Regional Small Business Recovery Assistance Program.

Included in council packets was a request for a FY21 Budget Amendment for Community Development Block Grant Funds Related to the Downtown Revitalization Project.

Prior to discussing the budget amendment, Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, shared the history of the downtown revitalization project that began with a planning grant awarded in 2016 to the downtown grant contract ending September 2020. Mr. Ramey's presentation showed the many improvements to downtown including the Cidery and Expo Center, streetscape and eastern gateway improvements, various downtown façade

improvements, wayfinding signage, and the Virginia Department of Transportation Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP).

Mr. Ramey explained due to COVID-19, several downtown projects were not able to be completed by the end of the fiscal year, so the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) extended the completion dates so the city must formally show the carryover of the remaining CDBG funds totaling \$56,476 that have been committed or will be expended in the FY21 fiscal budget. Mr. Ramey noted that since the \$56,476 is less than one percent of the city's budget a public hearing is not required.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – Caruso, council moved to adopt a budget amendment to the FY21 Budget, in the amount of \$56,476, for the Community Development Block Grant Funds related to the Downtown Revitalization Project.

The next agenda item was an update on the city's Façade Improvement Program and an additional funding request.

The city manager stated that council made a strategic decision in 2018 to self-fund a façade improvement program rather than use CDBG funding. He said initially council approved \$45,000 for the program and later that year approved an additional \$30,000 in funding. The city manager said the façade program is ongoing but to date the city has funded 11 façade improvements totaling \$74,660, and that 13 facades had been completed for a total investment of \$610,408.24. He said there are three more property owners interested in the Façade Improvement Program and that he is requesting additional funding for these inquiries.

Councilman Mays made a motion to approve an additional \$30,000 from unappropriated reserves for the city's Façade Improvement Program. Councilman Fultz seconded the motion, and the motion passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – Caruso.

At this time, city finance director Jeff Shupe asked council to adopt a budget amendment for the \$30,000 approved from unappropriated reserves.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a budget amendment to the FY21 Budget in the amount \$30,000 from unappropriated reserves.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a check to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, dated July 1, 2020, in the amount of \$105,336.00 to cover employee health insurance.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the check to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – Caruso, 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 Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Mays, 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 Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, 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 the Cloudsplitter 100 Ultra Trail Race planned for October 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> has 141 participants registered representing 24 states. He said Susan Howell has all the aid stations filled except for one and that she is contacting the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at the University of Virginia's College at Wise to see if this group would work the Devils Bathtub aid station.

Mr. Ramey said the Benges's Revenge Bike Race is scheduled for September 12<sup>th</sup>, and the Mountain Fork Half Marathon is planned for September 19<sup>th</sup>.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilwoman Belcher stated that she has noticed all the police activity and she thanked Police Chief James Lane for the work his department is doing to keep the citizens of Norton safe, adding that she is thankful for all city departments and the work that each is doing for the city.

Councilman Mays stated that he has no complaints and is thankful for so many things.

Mayor Fawbush said he and several others attended the grand opening of K&E Southern Sweets, L.L.E., in downtown Norton today, and that he welcomed the new business to the city.

Mayor Fawbush said he is glad to see that Lincoln Road Coffee House is open for business and that work has begun on the old Coalfield Progress building.

Mayor Fawbush said he is pleased to see that the new streetscapes are reaching completion, and added that he noticed coming into Norton on the northeast side that work is ongoing on both sides of Park Avenue. He said Norton is progressing and he is happy to observe the transformation.

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