

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, April 20, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Prior to roll call, Mayor Fawbush stated that the clerk was not in attendance and that the city manager would perform the clerk's duties during the meeting.

Present: Joseph Fawbush, Mark Caruso, Robert Fultz, Jr., Sarah Davis, and William Mays

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

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

At this time, Mayor Fawbush asked council to consider amending the agenda to include under Item 7-a New Business - presentation of Norton City Schools FY22 Budget, and under Item 7-F-6 Closed Meeting for Personnel as Per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia as amended - an appointment of city clerk.

It was the consensus of council to amend the agenda to include the two items, as specified above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Davis, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – Caruso, council moved to adopt the minutes of the April 6, 2021, meeting as presented.

At this point in the meeting, Mayor Fawbush welcomed participants of the 2021 Forward Wise County Class and Norton City School Board members to the council meeting.

During the Mayor's Call for Visitors, Mr. Jony Baker of 2017 Richard Long Road, Nora Virginia, spoke to council regarding the recent special election of District 38 Virginia Senator Travis Hackworth. Mr. Baker informed council Senator Hackworth is expected to have his Norton office open on April 28th, and he noted that the Republican Party of Virginia's 2021 Convention will be held at Senator Hackworth's office on Saturday, May 8, 2021. Mr. Baker said Senator Hackworth is excited and wants to be active in the community. He said the senator will have offices in Pulaski, Tazewell, and the City of Norton, and Mr. Baker stated that he would be working at the Norton office on behalf of Senator Hackworth. Mr. Baker said if the city or other constituents needs assistance, to contact him at Senator Hackworth's Norton office.

After a brief discussion, Mayor Fawbush welcomed Senator Hackworth and his staff to the City of Norton.

Mayor Fawbush advised Agenda Item 6-A, Authorization to Execute two Cooperative Agreements with the Wise County and City of Norton Victim/Witness Program, was tabled until the city attorney has had an opportunity to review the two agreements with Commonwealth Attorney Charles Slemp.

The first agenda item added under New Business was a presentation of Norton City Schools proposed 2021-2022 Fiscal Budget.

Norton City School Board Chairman Cody McElroy presented a brief PowerPoint presentation on the school board's proposed budget highlighting the board's objectives for the upcoming school year, the average daily membership (ADM) of 785 students, and the proposed FY22 Budget totaling \$11,405,710.63. He said the proposed budget included adjusted salaries to remain competitive, school resource officers (SRO) for both campuses, Safety Grant with required local match, summer remediation program due to the pandemic, project-based learning approach, funding for instructional resources/practices, continued technology enhancements, and innovation through the arts. He said the school division is requesting the Required Local Effort (RLE) of \$2,736,879, which represents an increase of \$145,291 over last year's budget; \$1,998,419 is for operational funding, \$715,597 is for debt service, and \$22,863, for the Textbook Fund. Mr. McElroy noted that school administration is currently working with vendors to provide estimates for additional safety enhancements at Norton Elementary and Middle School (NEMS) so the Safety Grant is yet to be determined. He then thanked council and the city for the enormous support given to Norton City Schools and he stated that the school board is excited about the future and working together for the citizens and students of Norton.

Norton City School Superintendent Dr. Gina Wohlford added that the school system cannot submit the Safety Grant application until August, and that she would provide the cost estimates to council as soon as school administration receives the information.

Mayor Fawbush noted the good working relationship between council and the school board, and he commended the school system for sound financial management. He stated that he is glad to see salary increases in the state budget this year and that council appreciates the school board and school system for all it does for Norton students. Mayor Fawbush said council will advise the school system on the proposed FY22 Budget once council has completed the city's budget process.

The city manager noted that council typically authorizes a public hearing after the school's budget presentation but since the budget presentation is early this year, council has the option to authorize a public hearing at the next meeting or wait until the city's budget process is completed.

It was the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to advertise a public hearing on the proposed Norton City School Budget as presented totaling \$11,405,710.63 at the May 4, 2021, council meeting.

In council packets for consideration was a request from Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge for a Revocable Special Use Permit allowing use of a portion of Veterans Park.

Mr. Ramey said that at the March 2nd council meeting, Mr. Blake Salyer, co-owner of Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge, presented his request to council to utilize a portion of Veterans Park for additional outdoor seating for his business. After a brief discussion at that meeting, council directed the city manager to work with Mr. Salyer, the city attorney, and the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) officer on the request. Mr. Ramey told council the specifics for the Revocable Special Use Permit have been worked out, and he gave a brief overview, via a PowerPoint presentation, of the park's history, previously issued permits, and the parks current use. He said under the Revocable Special Use Permit the coffee lounge has two requests for council's consideration: the first request is permission to utilize a portion of Veterans Park for outdoor seating and the installation of two ground decks, additional lighting, and a permanent railing for clear separation within the park; and the second request is authorization from council to allow alcoholic beverages on city property under Lincoln Road

Coffee Lounge ABC License. Mr. Ramey said that Mr. Salyer was in attendance to discuss his request further with council.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Salyer reviewed information from the March 2nd council meeting and told members the inside of the coffee lounge will be reconfigured to allow for a side entrance from the park. He said cable railing with wood would be used for park separation, and that he would like to move the Blue Star Memorial sign from its current location to the front curved corner of Veterans Park. Mr. Salyer stated he would assist in properly removing and replanting any shrubs and plantings to another location and that he would like to work with the city to install string lighting to the two adjacent buildings that would span throughout the park.

Mr. Ramey said included in council packets was a draft copy of the permit and that he would like to review the technical portions with council. He said the permit contained three main requests; first to allow Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge to utilize a portion of the park for outdoor seating, the installation of two ground decks, and to allow Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge to serve alcohol on city property.

After discussion of the requests and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to approve the request and to authorize the city manager to prepare a Revocable Special Use Permit for Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge to use a portion of Veterans Park limited to the purposes stated in the permit.

Additionally, it was the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to work with the Green Thumb Garden Club on relocation of the Blue Star Memorial sign and to have string lights installed in Veterans Park to be maintained by the city and included as property of Veterans Park.

Council had been presented a list of financial encumbrances for the General Operating Fund in the amount of \$50,454 for the year ending June 30, 2020.

Mr. Ramey said the encumbrances have been certified by city's auditor and the list is broken down for council's consideration.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Davis, Mays, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to approve the financial encumbrances for the General Operating Fund in the amount of \$50,454 for the year ending June 30, 2020.

The next agenda item was the consideration of the acceptance of a deed from the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA).

Mr. Ramey said the city currently has a multi-use connector trail project that will connect the city's downtown sidewalk system to the planned High Knob Visitor Center by extending the sidewalk that ends at the intersection at John I. Burton High School along the left side of 12th Street S.W., to the visitor center property. He said the sidewalk will enhance safety for citizens who live in that area that currently walk along the road as well as for visitors who may want to use the sidewalk to visit High Knob for recreational access. Mr. Ramey said the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is reviewing recent core drillings from the area and if samples are satisfactory, he anticipates to advertise for bids in late summer or early fall with construction to begin January 2022. He noted that the deed acceptance request is on council's agenda because VDOT requires the city to be in possession of all property that will be utilized to construct an asset with VDOT monies. Mr. Ramey said when the former Pepsi-Cola property was acquired for the visitor center, 0.115 acres was separated from the larger tract of property by Laurel Avenue. He said he assumes the original property was probably intact before it was split

later by the development of Laurel Avenue. Mr. Ramey said that it would be easier to convey the property to the city rather than obtaining an easement and he is asking council to consider formally accepting a deed of transfer for the tract that is 0.115 acres from the NIDA to the city. He said the deed was prepared by the city attorney and the conveyance has been approved as to form by Mr. Bradshaw.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilwoman Davis, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to approve and accept the conveyance of real estate that is 0.115 acres from the Norton Industrial Development Authority to the City of Norton.

The city manager provided an update on COVID-19 and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Ramey reported that the city has had an increase of 10 new COVID-19 cases for a total of 263 cases with one death reported for the city during this period. He said Wise County has had an increase of 43 new COVID-19 cases for a total of 3,039 cases with one death reported. Mr. Ramey then provided a vaccine update as of April 16th noting that 914 citizens had been fully vaccinated, 7,902 citizens for Wise County had been fully vaccinated, and 2,002,007 Virginians had been fully vaccinated. He then shared an article in the Bristol Herald Courier that compared the number of COVID-19 vaccinations by locality for Southwest Virginia and Norton ranked fourth for first vaccinations and about the same on the second vaccination.

Mr. Ramey reported no changes in CARES Act funding and said the city has not received any funding from the recently approved stimulus bill. He said the Virginia Municipal League (VML) sent information advising localities to check a link at the National League of Cities (NLC) for updates. Mr. Ramey said there is no timeline when the city will receive stimulus funding or a set amount. He stated that VML wrote federal legislators specifically regarding cities noting that Virginia is the only state that practices independent city status and cities were being considered in both funding categories. Mr. Ramey said VML asked legislators when considering funding scenarios to not forget that independent cities provide some of the same types of services that counties provide such as social services and constitutional officers.

Mr. Ramey stated that city administration is still drawing down money from the LENOWISCO Small Business Recovery Assistance Program and that city administration recently submitted a request for \$96,663.33 for businesses in Wise, Lee, and Scott Counties and a small percentage of funding for Norton businesses.

Mr. Ramey told council city administration continues to distribute the Municipal Utility Relief Program funds and he advised that additional funding is available through this program.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a transfer to Norton City Schools, dated January 25, 2021, in the amount of \$150,000 to cover January 2021 payroll expenditures.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Davis, Mays, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT - None, 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, Davis, Mays, Caruso, and 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, and Section 2.2-3711 (A) (5) of the Code of

Virginia for discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcements have been made of the business or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community, as amended.

Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Davis, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to go back into open meeting.

Mayor Fawbush declared council back in open meeting.

The city manager polled each member of council as to the Certification of Closed Meeting with each answering yes. Mr. Ramey then read a Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, 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 two nominations to the Norton Industrial Development Authority for four-year terms to expire May 10, 2025.

Councilman Caruso nominated Blake Salyer and Roger Sloce to be reappointed to the Norton Industrial Development Authority for four-year terms to expire May 10, 2025.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Blake Salyer and Roger Sloce to be reappointed to the Norton Industrial Development Authority for four-year terms to expire May 10, 2025.

At this time, Mayor Fawbush read a letter from Clerk of Council Rebecca K. Coffey stating that she deeply regrets to inform council that she would be resigning from her position as clerk effective upon appointment of her replacement. In the letter, she stated that it has been an honor to serve as clerk and she wishes council and the city great success in the future.

It was the consensus of council to accept Rebecca K. Coffey's resignation as clerk of council with council members wishing her well.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations for the appointment of city clerk.

Councilman Caruso made a motion and nominated Fred L. Ramey, Jr., to be appointed as interim city clerk until the position is filled by council. The motion was seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with council moving that the nominations cease.

Mayor Fawbush declared Fred L. Ramey, Jr., appointed as interim city clerk until council fills the position.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey stated that the city's Great American Cleanup was held Saturday, April 17th with 30 volunteers picking up 88 bags of trash. He then showed a video Norton Parks and Recreation recorded to promote the cleanup and how citizens can volunteer to adopt-a-spot for litter cleanup four times per year. Mr. Ramey noted that the University of Virginia's College at Wise has a community service requirement for students and that a group of students has been picking up trash on a weekly basis to obtain their required hours.

The city manager stated that he informed council earlier of a serious water leak in the Roundtown section of the city. Via a PowerPoint presentation, he showed council the area of the leak and the challenge the city's Transmission and Distribution (T&D) department had in locating and reaching the leak. The city manager said the city's T&D crew was able to isolate the leak which meant Roundtown residents were without water. He said the situation created a Water Boil Notice for the 15 houses in that service area which is a requirement of the Virginia Department Health (VDH). Mr. Ramey said the boil notice was placed on the city's social media and notices were hand delivered to Roundtown residents with an offer from the city to purchase bottled water for the duration of the water outage and boil notice.

Mr. Ramey said the Norton Business Challenge begins Wednesday, April 21st and he is excited to get the challenge started.

The city manager provided council with copies of the latest Retail Sales Tax Report, the 2020 Annual Report from the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA), and a new city sticker.

Mr. Ramey said that the following events are scheduled: Outdoor Yoga at Flag Rock, the city is hosting a regional hike at Sugar Hill Loop Trail in St. Paul, and a High Knob Full Moon Hike with an astronomy presentation,

He reminded council of the budget work session scheduled for Saturday, May 1st, at 8:30 a.m.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Caruso thanked the volunteers who participated in the Great American Cleanup. He encouraged city administration to purchase additional "Fine for Littering" signs and install them at the city's high-volume trash locations to discourage people from littering.

Councilman Caruso thanked the Public Works T&D Department for their dedication and for repairing the waterline break in Roundtown, adding each week council is thanking city departments for great work.

Mayor Fawbush told council he visited the new city shop and he considers the new facility a huge improvement over the old city shop. He said there is room for expansion if needed and ample storage. Mayor Fawbush said that council made a wise decision to purchase the building and that the new shop is impressive.

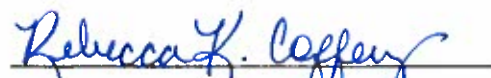
There being no further business to come before council, Mayor Fawbush declared the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council