

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, May 3, 2022, 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 Sarah Davis

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager and Interim City Clerk

The invocation was given by Rev. Roger Sloce, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Norton Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Davis, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt the minutes of the April 19, 2022, council meeting as presented.

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

City Manager Fred Ramey said Norton City Schools Board Chairman Cody McElroy was at the council meeting to present the proposed Norton City Schools Budget for FY2022-2023.

Mr. McElroy said the school system's budget will be amended once the General Assembly budget is approved and the school system staff has worked extremely hard during what he would consider a very difficult budget season.

The school board chairman introduced himself, Norton City Schools Superintendent Dr. Gina Wohlford, and board member Cheryl Redman, who were both in attendance. Board members Dr. Wes Campbell, Carol Caruso, and Mark Sturgill were unable to attend the meeting.

The board chairman advised that the school system is using the most conservative budget model. The state budget factors include a 10 percent salary increase for staff over the biennium, which requires a local match, and a Norton City Schools Composite Index of .2655.

Mr. McElroy showed a brief PowerPoint presentation on the proposed balanced budget which totals \$12,359,540.49 and is based on a projected Average Daily Membership (ADM) of 770 students. He said the school system is budgeting for less students for 2022-23 due to a large graduating class of 75 students and the number of kindergartners entering the school system expected to be in the 50s. The FY2021-2022 budget was based on an ADM of 794.24 students. The FY2022-2023 required local effort (RLE) by the city is \$2,916,763, of which \$2,155,834 is operational funding, \$733,866 is for Debt Service, and \$27,063 is for the Textbook Fund. Local funding has increased \$179,884 over last year's budget.

Budget highlights included: competitive salaries to attract and retain highly qualified personnel; School Resource Officer (SRO) funding for Norton Elementary and Middle School and John I. Burton High School; a \$150,000 safety grant, with a \$37,500 local match, for the high school (cameras for outdoor facilities, a digital repeater for radio system and additional radios, voice over internet protocol phones, and vape sensors); effective remediation and summer school programs to address unfinished learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic; funding for instructional resources/practices; Innovation Through the Arts; and continued technology enhancements. He advised that the school system will continue to partner with the city on joint projects.

The board chairman asked if council had any questions.

There were no questions from council other than inquiry about when the General Assembly is expected to approve the budget.

Mr. McElroy and Dr. Wohlford advised they were not sure when that would happen.

The school board chairman also updated council on the FY2022 Budget and potential budget amendments that are dependent upon action by the General Assembly. He said since the FY2022 Budget is based on an ADM of 794.24 students as opposed to 785, the school system is anticipating an increase in funding. He said the formula actually shows a decrease in local funding, which could mean approximately \$20,000 would be returned to the city.

Mr. McElroy thanked council, city staff and administration, all the way to the city public works department for the close working relationship the school system has with the city.

The mayor and council members thanked the school administration for that close relationship and for the job the school system does with the funding that is provided.

The city manager requested council authorization to allow the city manager to advertise a public hearing on the proposed FY2022-2023 Norton City Schools Budget, as presented, totaling \$12,359,540.49.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Davis, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to authorize the city manager to advertise a public hearing on the proposed FY2022-2023 Norton City Schools Budget, as presented, totaling \$12,359,540.49.

The next item on the agenda was a request for authorization for the city manager to advertise a public hearing to amend City Code Sections §14-132 and §14-140 to bring City Code in conformity with the Code of Virginia. The amendments will remove switchblade knives from the list of objects which may not be sold, possessed or carried and the criminal penalties for the sale, possession or carrying of such knives.

The city manager said following code review by City Attorney William Bradshaw, counsel advised amending City Code to conform with state code which becomes effective July 1, 2022.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Davis, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Davis, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to authorize the city manager to advertise a public hearing to amend City Code Sections §14-132 and §14-140 to bring City Code in conformity with the Code of Virginia, as stated above. (Insert)

A Resolution Proclaiming the Week of May 11-17, 2022, as National Police Week in the City of Norton was presented for adoption by council.

Mr. Ramey noted that this is the first time this resolution has officially been before city council and ironically one year ago at the first meeting in May, Norton Police Chief James Lane asked if the city could have a national law enforcement resolution. The city manager said a resolution had not been drafted to bring before city council, so the decision was made to postpone the resolution to the next year. Just days after that meeting last year, Chief Lane was shot while on duty responding to a shoplifting call.

Since the law enforcement resolution was Chief Lane's idea, Mr. Ramey said he thought it was appropriate for Chief Lane, who happened to be present at the council meeting, to present the resolution to city council.

Council members applauded Chief Lane as he walked with the aid of a walker to the podium to present the resolution to council and share his recovery progress.

Commenting that Saturday, May 7th, 2022, would be the one-year anniversary of when the shooting incident occurred, Chief Lane said he thought this was an appropriate time for him to appear before council to present the resolution and update council about his progress. He said he still needs a wheelchair, but is able to use a walker for short distances. He is continuing his physical therapy and is working toward total reliance on a walker and eventually transitioning to a cane. The final step will be walking unassisted, which he said he will do. He expressed his appreciation for the support he and his family have received during his recovery process and he said he continues to be humbled by the support shown by not only the citizens of Norton, but also Wise County, and beyond. He also thanked council members for their support.

Chief Lane also commended the dedication of the Norton Police Department officers and asked First Sergeant Greg Mays to distribute an inspirational drawing he wanted to share with council members.

The police chief spoke briefly about the duties, responsibilities, hazards, and sacrifices police officers face while doing their jobs. He said he is proud of the Norton Police Department officers and is honored to serve with them. A luncheon will be planned and the Resolution Proclaiming the Week of May 11-17, 2022, as National Police Week in the City of Norton will be framed and displayed at the police department following approval by council.

Chief Lane asked if council had any questions and credited the city manager with drafting the resolution and placing the resolution on the agenda for council consideration.

There were no questions from council.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Resolution Proclaiming the Week of May 11-17, 2022, as Police Week in the City of Norton, as presented. (Insert)

Councilman Caruso said the resolution recognizing law enforcement officers will be displayed on the digital sign in the municipal parking lot.

The city manager said the city will continue to have blue lights illuminate the Welcome to Norton sign by Southwest Insurance throughout the month of May in honor of law enforcement officers.

Councilman Fultz said the resolution passage designating Wednesday, May 15th as Peace Officers Memorial Day is incorrect, because May 15th is on a Sunday. Peace Officers Memorial Day is observed in honor of law enforcement officers, who through their courageous deeds, have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community or have become disabled in the performance of duty.

The city manager said he would verify the correct day/date so the resolution is correct.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Davis, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Davis, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to go into closed meeting to discuss 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 Mays, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to go back into open meeting.

Mayor Fawbush declared council back in open meeting.

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

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Davis, and passed by the following unanimous vote, YES – Mays, Fultz, Davis, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

In comments from the city manager:

The city manager reminded council that at the March 15, 2022, meeting council accepted the loan grant funding offer from the Virginia Department of Health for the Southside Waterline Replacement Project and authorized city administration to move forward with the project. Since that time, City Engineer Stephen McElroy and City Finance Director Jeffery Shupe have worked with the Virginia Resources Authority to begin the bond issuance. The next step is a required public hearing which will need to be held at the May 17, 2022, council meeting. Mr. Ramey said a copy of the advertisement for public hearing had been placed on their desks and to contact city administration with any questions.

Mr. Ramey also said council at the April 19, 2022, meeting approved the transfer of \$2,500 from the \$15,000 in FY2022 Vacant Home Demolition-Replacement Program grant funding to the FY2022 Dilapidated Home Demolition Program since interest had been shown for another home demolition project. The city manager said he met with another homeowner in Ramsey today who is interested in removing an additional dilapidated structure, so he is asking council to consider moving another \$2,500 from the FY2022 Vacant Home Demolition-Replacement Program to the FY2022 Dilapidated Home Demolition Program in anticipation of the approval of this recent home demolition application.

After a brief discussion about remaining funding in both programs, Councilman Fultz suggested transferring \$5,000 from the FY2022 Vacant Home Demolition-Replacement Program to the FY2022 Dilapidated Home Demolition Program and leaving \$7,500 in the Vacant Home Demolition-Replacement Program.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Davis, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to approve the transfer of \$5,000 from the Vacant Home Demolition-Replacement Program to the Dilapidated Home Demolition Program for FY2022, as stated above.

The city manager advised that city administration plans on formally presenting a draft of the FY2022-2023 Budget to council at the May 17, 2022, council meeting.

Mr. Ramey provided council with the city's latest monthly financial statements.

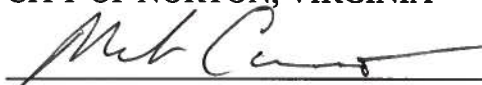
The following comments were made by council members:

Councilwoman Davis and the mayor said they were happy to see Chief James Lane at the council meeting.

Councilman Caruso said the trails along Flag Rock and the Norton Reservoir area are in great shape with very little trash present.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Mark Caruso, Vice Mayor

ATTEST:



Fred Ramey, Jr., Interim Clerk of Council