

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, December 2, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers with Mayor Robert Raines presiding.

Present: Joseph Hunnicutt, Jack Wallace, Robert Raines, William Mays, and Joseph Fawbush

Also Present: E. W. Ward, City Manager and Bill Bradshaw, City Attorney

Mayor Raines welcomed Councilmen Elect Mark Caruso and Terry Roop.

The invocation was given by the City Manager and was followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by the Superintendent of the Norton City Schools, Dr. Lee Brannon.

Upon a motion by Jack Wallace, seconded by Joseph Hunnicutt, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2008 meeting as presented.

22096

There was no response to the Mayor's call for visitors.

22097.

Tonight's segment of the Looking Back Series was on the topic of technology. This was presented, via PowerPoint, by the Assistant City Manager, Fred Ramey.

Mr. Ramey advised that the City's first computer system was purchased in 1987 and was an IBM System 34 Mainframe, which was for basic accounting and used for the water, sewer, and financial departments. Also, there was an IBM PS 2 PC with a DOS Operating System and Word Processing capability and an Apple Macintosh computer which had water data management software. Additionally, the Police Department had a PC with a program to track summons.

He then discussed the advancements in technology that have been made in the Finance Department, Water Plant, Police Department, Commissioner of Revenue's office, GIS, Building Department, and the Public Works Department. In 1994, the City created Norton Municipal Access Channel 51, which is used to broadcast pre-recorded and edited programs, public service announcements, and to provide messages and other information to our citizens. Mr. Ramey then gave an update on the Information Technology Department (IT), which covers computers, off-site connections, a City-wide email system for City staff, and server based programs.

22098

Council was also advised on the City's web page development, including upgrades with the City Code and council minutes now on line. Soon, the City will offer the availability of online water and tax payments to our citizens.

Telephone system upgrades have been made which includes voice mail.

Mr. Ramey then discussed briefly upcoming technology initiatives that the City will be facing in the future. He also advised that tonight, Mayor Raines has a paperless council packet on a laptop computer and that may be the way of the future.

Appreciation was extended to Mayor Raines, Councilman Wallace, and the other members of City Council for giving the opportunity to expand the technology within the City.

Mayor Raines thanked Mr. Ramey for tonight's presentation.

Due to the weather conditions, Water Plant Superintendent Tommy Roberts was unable to get to the reservoirs for a current reading on the City's water capacity. Mr. Ward did advise that the recent precipitation has helped and we are only purchasing 175,000 gallons per day from the Wise County Public Service Authority. This is down from 500,000 gallons a day that we had previously been purchasing.

22099

A public hearing was held on An Ordinance Exempting Certain Real Property and Improvements Thereto from Real Property Taxation by the City of Norton as per Code Section No. 58.1-3651. This ordinance covers various properties owned by the Wellmont Health Systems in the City.

The City Attorney advised that this item first came to Council's attention approximately one year ago. Present tonight is the attorney representing Wellmont, Ms. Senitria Goodman of the law firm, Hunter, Smith & Davis of Kingsport, Tennessee. Mr. Bradshaw advised that Council has the choice of either granting any or all of the exemptions or declining any or all of them. He further advised that the public hearing tonight had been duly advertised.

There were no questions or comments prior to the public hearing.

Mayor Raines opened the public hearing.

During the public hearing, Ms. Goodman spoke briefly to Council. She advised that the properties requested for tax exemption are used for non-profit or charitable purposes. Mountain View Hospital should be a complete exemption and the other properties are used for charitable purposes. Ms. Goodman then advised Council she would be willing to answer any questions they may have.

22100

Also speaking during the public hearing was Councilman Elect Mark Caruso with a question on the proposed ordinance.

There being no further public comment, Mayor Raines closed the public hearing

Following a lengthy discussion and upon a motion by William Mays, seconded by Joseph Hunnicutt, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Hunnicutt, Wallace, Mays, Fawbush, Raines, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council authorized the City Attorney to amend the ordinance as presented to limit the exemption to Properties # 435-A-7 and 435-A-6BO for the Wellmont Health System effective the tax year of 2009. The current amount of tax on this property is \$75,009.60.

Mayor Raines advised Ms. Goodman that Council appreciated her being present at tonight's meeting and that Wellmont can address tax exemption for the other properties in the future should they desire to do so.

Council had been presented with A Resolution of the City Council Requesting the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to Establish an Urban Construction Project for the Hawthorne Signalization and Improvement Project and a public hearing is to be held on this resolution tonight. Mr. Ward advised with an Urban Construction Project, VDOT pays 98% of the cost of the project and the City pays 2%.

22101

Mr. Ward advised Council that VDOT had advised the City to change from the Tipple Hill Project to another project. The project Council had selected at the last meeting was

the Hawthorne Signalization and Improvement Project. In order to change projects, a public hearing has to be held and a resolution adopted requesting this change.

There were no questions or comments from Council prior to the public hearing.

At this time, Mayor Raines opened the public hearing.

There being no public comment, Mayor Raines closed the public hearing.

Following a brief discussion and upon a motion by Joseph Hunnicutt, seconded by Jack Wallace, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES - Hunnicutt, Wallace, Raines, Mays, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt A Project Resolution for Urban Construction Program. (Insert)

Council had received a request for an amendment to the 2008-2009 budget of the Norton City Schools in the amount of \$45,563. Present to discuss this with Council was Dr. Lee Brannon, Superintendent of the Norton City Schools.

Dr. Brannon advised this sum of money is federal dollars and is Title I money, which is used for reading and math programs.

Upon a motion by William Mays, seconded by Joseph Hunnicutt, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to amend the 2008-2009 budget of the Norton City Schools in the amount of \$45,563.

Dr. Brannon then gave Council an update on the Norton Elementary and Middle School Project. He stated the construction is going well and no students will have to be moved from campus the first of the year as previously thought. They will be locating classrooms in the gym and classes will be held there. The scheduled completion date is fall of 2009.

Mr. Richard Phillips of Mountain Empire Community College presented Council with a brief update on happenings at the college. He advised the college had received two reductions in state funds; however, they have had no reduction in personnel and have had some budget reductions.

He briefly discussed the AIMS Program and advised Council he would be willing to answer any questions they may have.

Mayor Raines expressed appreciation to Mr. Phillips for tonight's update.

Council had received a request for a Special Use Permit from Norton Community Hospital to use City right-of-way to place a temporary office building behind the hospital on 14th Street. Mr. Ward advised that Norton Community had already appeared before the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals on this item.

Representing Norton Community Hospital was David Winchell. He spoke briefly to Council advising of the need to use this right-of-way.

Following a brief discussion and upon a motion by Joseph Hunnicutt, seconded by Jack Wallace, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to approve a Special Use Permit for Norton Community Hospital to encroach on City right-of-way on 14th Street for the installation of a temporary office building. This permit will expire in one year.

Council had received a request from the City's Department of Social Services for additional funds for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

22102

22103

22104

Speaking to Council was Roger Ramey, Director of the City's Social Services Department. He advised that the State budget cuts have affected their funding and they are without funds to carry them over to the end of the fiscal year. They are closing the NICE Center, which is funded by federal funds, discontinued janitorial services with the employees now doing this, and have cut non-essential travel. He further advised that whatever amount Council appropriated would be matched, dollar for dollar, by the State. He also advised that there have been increases in those seeking help with fuel assistance and food stamps. The amount he is requesting from the City is \$60,000.

22105

Following a brief discussion and upon a motion by William Mays, seconded by Jack Wallace, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council authorized \$60,000 in local funds to the City's Social Service Department to be used for the remainder of the 2008-2009 fiscal year. These funds are to come from Unappropriated Reserves.

Mr. Ramey thanked Council for their assistance.

Mayor Raines advised Mr. Ramey that his department has done an admirable job.

Council had a request for confirmation of electronic transfers to the Norton City Schools in the amount of \$155,000 for payroll and fringe benefits and \$668,496.57 for Quesenberry's, Incorporated for the Norton Elementary School Renovation Project.

22106

Upon a motion by Joseph Hunnicutt, seconded by Joseph Fawbush, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council confirmed two electronic transfers to the Norton City Schools in the amounts of \$155,000 and \$668,496.57.

In comments from the City Manager, Mr. Ward advised that:

The City offices will be closed on Thursday and Friday, December 25th and 26th rather than Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for the holiday. City employees will work all day on Christmas Eve.

The last meeting in December will be a reception type format and will be held at the Hotel Norton Lobby from 5:30 to 7:00 with a meeting afterward.

22107

There were no comments from the City Attorney.

22108

In comments from Council, Vice Mayor Mays advised that a date and time needs to be established for the organizational meeting. He asked for a consensus from Council members and Council-elect members for this meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on January 6, 2009 in Council Chambers. All were in agreement for this time and date.

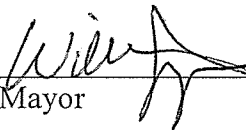
22109

Mayor Raines expressed his appreciation to Mr. Ramey and Mr. Shupe for getting the electronic packet ready for him for tonight's meeting.

22110

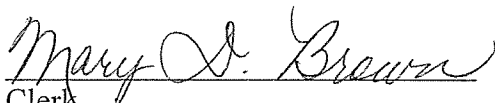
There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk