

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor William Mays presiding.

Present: Mark Caruso, Robert Fultz, William Mays, Joseph Fawbush, and Delores Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager and Bill Bradshaw, City Attorney

The invocation was given by Father Tim Drake and was followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane and members of the Norton Police Department's Explorer Group.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the March 17, 2015 meeting as presented.

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During the Mayor's call for visitors, W. C. "Buzz" Witt, the City's representative on the Spearhead Trail Committee, gave Council a brief update. He advised that the eastern Pocahontas Trail, a forty mile section in Buchanan County, should be completed by summer and work should begin in Dickenson County soon as well as in Pennington Gap. Easements in Scott County have almost been completed and the Committee is a recipient of a VCEDA Grant.

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He then advised of the success in St. Paul for a trail opening and of the economic impact that the region has already seen.

Councilman Caruso asked if Mr. Witt could supply Council with an economical information sheet and Mr. Witt advised he will get this to the City Manager by Friday.

Following a brief discussion, during which Mr. Witt answered questions from Council members, Mayor Mays and Council members thanked Mr. Witt for this update.

Mr. Ramey advised Police Chief James Lane will speak to Council regarding their department's Explorer Program. The City Manager advised that Chief Lane had once been a Police Explorer. Mr. Lane advised that the City's First Sergeant Greg Mays was also a member of the Explorer Post several years ago.

He then presented a brief PowerPoint presentation on the group's participation in the Winter Fest Competition held in Gatlinburg, Tennessee in February. The participants came in 2<sup>nd</sup> in Drug Identification, 2<sup>nd</sup> place in talent contest, 15<sup>th</sup> in Unknown Trouble, 31st in Physical Fitness, and 5<sup>th</sup> in Burglary in Progress. He then introduced three of the members: David Underwood-6 year member, Tessa Culbertson-2 year member, and David Huff-4 year member. Not present at tonight's meeting was Devin McNew-4 months member. He then introduced the sponsor of the program for the past 2 years, Officer Donald Harding. The members and their sponsor then received a standing ovation and were asked to come forward and Council members shook their hands.

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Police Chief Lane advised that the group conducted various fundraisers to pay for their entire trip.

Councilman Caruso advised the Police Department is doing a great job from the chief on down and Mayor Mays advised he would like to see the number of explorers increase.

Dr. Scott Hamilton, President of Mountain Empire Community College gave Council a brief update on the college advising that the spring enrollment has elevated and is stabilized at this time. Dual enrollment is up with 38 students. He stated he was very proud of the faculty and staff for the work they have done to maintain the highest percentage of high school graduates in the state to attend MECC. An update was given also on the work the college does for career training.

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Following this update, Dr. Hamilton advised he would be willing to answer any questions from Council members and stated if they could do anything for the City to please advise them.

Mayor Mays thanked Dr. Hamilton for his update.

The City Manager advised Council that Amy Bond, Director of the Lonesome Pine Regional Library, was present to give Council an update of their activities.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, she gave a brief history of the library system with its establishment in 1958 and taking residency in the current building in 1975. There are over 513,000 items in their entire library region that can be used by patrons. The Mail-Box Library is currently the oldest and largest in the State. Also discussed were all of the resources, both online and present in their nine branches, and a description of various programs for children, and transporting their programs to the public at venues such as the Best Friend Festival, Farmers Market, Regency Towers, and the Big Read at the Hotel Norton.

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She thanked Council for their continued support.

Mayor Mays thanked Ms Bond for her update.

At this time, Lann Malesky, 1113 Virginia Avenue, NW, the City's representative on the Library Board, spoke briefly to Council advising of the wonderful services provided by the library system. He advised that the Board has cut hours and not filled any vacant positions. He invited Council to visit the library and see the scope of work that it offers and that would be essential in their evaluation of the library's needs during budget talks. He then asked Council to reinstate the cut made to the funds appropriated to the library in the current budget and presented Council with a brochure outlining activities for National Library Week. He further stated that the Board is very fortunate to have Ms. Bond as its Director.

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Councilman Fawbush advised that Council appreciates Mr. Malesky's services on the Library Board. Mayor Mays, as well as other Council members, thanked him for his presentation.

Ms. Erin Riedhammer, Regional Director of the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, presented a PowerPoint update to Council. She recognized Carol Caruso, a valuable member of their Board of Directors, and W. C. "Buzz" Witt, a former member, who were in attendance at tonight's meeting.

The Heart of Appalachia Tourism was formed in 1993 specifically for the Coalfield region to promote, expand, and develop the tourism industry. It is the only Tourism Authority in the state.

She advised of the fresh new logo selected and a new campaign designed to strengthen the interest in outdoor adventure and scenic beauty. This campaign, "Heart Rate" Campaign, was selected to elevate the heart rate with activities in our area and to relax your heart rate with low key activities within the region. They are partnering with the Virginia Tourism Corporation and were awarded a \$50,000 MLP Grant in the spring of 2014 and a \$28,105 MLP grant in the fall of 2014.

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Following a lengthy discussion on various other aspects of their new campaign, Mayor Mays thanked her for her very informative presentation.

Council had been presented in their packets A Proclamation Declaring National Public Safety 9-1-1 Telecommunicators Week April 12-18, 2015.

Mr. Ramey advised that these are individuals who are our unseen emergency services heroes that the City likes to recognize whenever they can. In 2014, our Police Dispatchers had 3,427 9-1-1 calls and 34,059 non-emergency calls.

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Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt A Proclamation Declaring National Public Safety 9-1-1 Telecommunicators Week April 12-18, 2015. (Insert)

In their packets, Council had a copy of a check payable to the Wise County Treasurer in the amount of \$227,108.68 covering 2013-2014 the City's share of Courthouse and Law Enforcement Expenses.

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Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to approve a check to the Wise County Treasurer in the amount of \$227,108.68 for services listed above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to go into closed meeting per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia, as amended to discuss personnel.

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Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to go back into open meeting.

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Mayor Mays 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 the following unanimous vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

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

Property Tax Tickets were mailed out today and should be delivered later this week. A public hearing will be held at the April 21<sup>st</sup> City Council Meeting to consider amending the Norton City Schools budget as requested recently.

Flag Rock opened for the season on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Adopt-A-Truck Program returns this month as part of the Keep America Beautiful Campaign and will run from April 17<sup>th</sup> – April 27<sup>th</sup>.

The next Capital Improvement Workshop will be held this Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, at 8:30 a.m.

The VACO Regional Legislative Meeting will be held tomorrow evening at UVA-Wise from 7-9 p.m. He had placed a brochure at each desk and advised it was a unique opportunity to be invited and to attend.

The annual Chamber of Commerce Gala is this Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, at UVA-Wise.

There were no comments from the City Attorney.

In comments from Council:

Councilwoman Belcher inquired if there was a need to register for the VACO meeting and was advised there was not. She further advised she was impressed with the scores of the individual explorers and congratulated them on a job well done.

There were no comments from Councilman Fawbush.

Councilman Caruso asked about the progress on the base for the Woodbooger statute and was advised it had been poured and should be dry in a week or so. He also inquired about a new flag being installed at Flag Rock. Mr. Ramey advised this would be done soon.

Councilman Caruso noted that Kingsport had applied for and received a Certified Adventure Tourism Destination and inquired if Virginia had such a program. Mr. Ramey advised that he did not think so, but Councilman Caruso advised he would check into this.

Stating that adventure tourism is now being recognized as an economic engine, the City needs for everyone to work on how to get the City to be a destination hub.

He inquired as to whether the City had any more signs for the trails. Mr. Ramey said he would check into this; however he did not think that there were any more. The Councilman advised the City needs to jump on this before hiking season begins

He advised that the Police Department serves as Ambassadors in Uniform for tourists and it may be a good time to conduct a workshop for Police Department employees.

Councilman Fultz inquired about the public hearing to be held at the next Council Meeting. Mr. Ramey advised it would be one of the first items on the agenda.

He inquired if the increase in restaurants sales in St. Paul was done with or without a rate change.

He them inquired as to an update on the Safe Walk to Schools Project.

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Mr. Ramey advised that the hydro seeding of the bank would be taking place soon. They have removed all material that needs to be and can start setting block. The goal now is for the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy's portion of money to be spent by the end of June. Fencing is going up and progress is being made.

He commended the Police Department Explorer Program and inquired as to how many riding hours the employers had done. Police Chief Lane said he would get this information for Council.

He is very appreciative that Mountain Empire Community College is in the region.

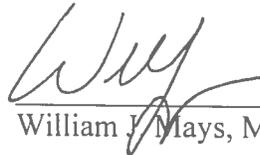
He has come up with an idea for a slogan, "Rocking City" that might be considered being used.

Mayor Mays advised he will echo everyone's comments on the Employer Program.

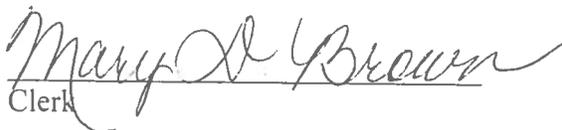
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There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA

  
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William J. Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Clerk