

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, September 1, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor William Mays presiding.

Present: Mark Caruso, Robert Fultz, Jr., William Mays, and Dee Belcher

Absent: Joseph Fawbush

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

The invocation was given by City Manager Fred Ramey and was followed by the pledge of allegiance led by First Sergeant Greg Mays.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the August 18, 2015 meeting as presented.

During the Mayor's call for visitors, Mrs. Linda Leonard, 1005 Virginia Avenue, N.W., came forward to present City Council with a handout on the Arts in the Park event scheduled for September 12, 2015 in Norton City Park. Ms. Leonard invited Council to the event and advised Council the planning of the event was going well.

Dr. Scott Hamilton, President of Mountain Empire Community College, presented Council with an update on activities at the college. Enrollment is up 8% over this time last year and dual enrollment is also up. Last year John I. Burton High School had 18 students enrolled in dual enrollment and this year the college has 31 students on campus. The college has been doing testing at the high school and there will be other students enrolled in dual enrollment that will be taught at the high school.

Dr. Hamilton presented Council with a handout outlining the college's goal for student success. He advised the college is mainly focused on students not only getting into college, but also finishing college and receiving either a diploma or certificate.

Mayor Mays thanked Dr. Hamilton for his update.

The City Manager informed Council that the Planning Commission has been working on amending and updating the City's Zoning Ordinance and that Mr. Winfred Collins, the City's Building Official was present to summarize the process and to answer any questions Council may have regarding the proposed modifications to the City's Zoning Ordinance.

During his summarization via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Collins reviewed the process with Council beginning with the rezoning application submitted in August 2014 and informed Council that the Planning Commission finalized a draft amendment and draft official map on May 14, 2015. The City Attorney has approved the draft zoning text and the official map amendment is provided tonight for Council's review before referring the matter back to the Planning Commission.

Following a brief discussion, it was consensus of Council to bring the Proposed Zoning Ordinance back on Council's agenda at the October 5th meeting to give Council adequate time to review the draft official map amendment.

Council had a lease agreement between Norton City School Board and the City of Norton for the former swimming pool property included in their packets. Mr. Ramey advised Council that since the last meeting he had shared the information with Dr. Perrigan and the insurance information has been updated and matches the school system. Dr. Perrigan indicated that he is ready to share with the School Board upon Council's approval.

There were no questions or concerns from Council members and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES - Caruso, Fultz, Belcher, Mays, NO - None, ABSENT - Fawbush, Council moved to approve the lease agreement between Norton City School Board and the City of Norton for the former swimming pool property.

Council had been presented in their packet A Resolution Authorizing Application to the Virginia Department of Health and Water Supply Assistance Grant Fund. Mr. Ramey advised Council the draft resolution would allow City Administration to apply to the Virginia Department of Health for a planning grant. The proposed planning grant would allow for a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to study the feasibility of membrane filtration versus a traditional plant upgrade project, analyzing potential cost savings in operation and maintenance cost, and include increased electrical consumption. The project would also include an Environmental Assessment and a Pilot Study for membrane filtration.

There being no comments or questions from Council and upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to adopt the Resolution Authorizing Application to the Virginia Department of Health and Water Supply Assistance Grant. (Insert)

In their packets, Council had one check to be confirmed. The check was made payable to Mattern and Craig in the amount of \$120,782.92.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to confirm the one check as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, 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, and discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publically held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (3) of the Code of Virginia, as amended.

Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

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

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, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – Fawbush, Council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

Mayor Mays opened the floor for nominations of Clerk of Council.

Councilman Caruso nominated Rebecca Coffey to be appointed as Clerk of Council.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved that the nominations cease.

Mayor Mays declared Rebecca Coffey appointed as Clerk of Council.

Mayor Mays opened the floor for nominations to the Norton Tourism Board for a four year term.

Councilman Fultz nominated Carol Caruso to be reappointed to the Norton Tourism Board.

Upon a motion by Mayor Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Fultz, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – Fawbush, ABSTAIN – Caruso, Council moved that the nominations cease.

Mayor Mays declared Carol Caruso reappointed to the Norton Tourism Board for the remainder of a four year term which will expire on September 30, 2019.

At this time, Mayor Mays advised Council there was a citizen who wished to approach Council that did not make it to the 6:00 meeting.

Chris Jones advised Council he was present tonight as a citizen but he is also on the Norton Tourism Board. Mr. Jones then stated he wanted Council to understand the economic pressures on area businesses in Southwest Virginia. He said he feels there is an urgency to get things done quicker, and feels we are dragging our feet. Mr. Jones explained he felt there were many pieces to the puzzle, one of which was the Woodbooger event. He stated he is not suggesting Council is not doing anything but we need to get on the stick. Mr. Jones advised Council he recently became a member of Round the Mountain and spoke with Heartwood in Abingdon and they were thrilled he has a storefront for them to use in their tourism promotions of this area. Mr. Jones advised Council this was another piece of the puzzle. He asked Council to be open and try new ideas. Mr. Jones thanked Council for their time.

Councilman Fultz asked if there was a business association. Mr. Jones advised they had tried two or more times to have a Norton Business Association without success.

Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Jones.

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

City Administration had been advised that October tax tickets have been printed and should be going out next week.

Arts in the Park and a 5K Glow Run are scheduled for Saturday, September 12th and the City will be coordinating and working with these events.

There were no comments from the City Attorney.

Mayor Mays asked the City Attorney to explain the information provided City Council on utility vehicles. The City Attorney explained a special use permit cannot be issued for utility vehicles. It has to be done by ordinance and Council has to be able to recite in any ordinance that Council decides to adopt that Council has considered the matters as outlined in paragraph 4 of the letter. In addition, utility vehicles must be in harmony with the state and local transportation plans, the statewide pedestrian policy and operators must have a valid driver's license. After further discussion, Mayor Mays asked the City Attorney if it were possible to prepare a draft ordinance by September 15th. The City Attorney said he felt like it was something he could do.

In comments from Council:

Councilwoman Belcher thanked the Police Department for being on top of the issue with the recent fugitive from Florida and advised she was ready to do her part to get things done.


Councilman Fultz was also thankful of the Norton Police Department and is grateful the issue was handled without incident.

He advised Mr. Jones a lot of people felt his pain and are concerned about our area. He agrees there is not one answer. There are multiple pieces to this puzzle and we need to act upon each piece. Our success is tied to the County's success and to the region's success because a certain amount of interaction is inevitable. Councilman Fultz then thanked Mr. Jones for speaking to Council.

Councilman Caruso stated he had some concerns and he is not one to pat people on the back for doing a good job. He advised there are 25 empty store fronts in the city center and downtown is dying for a lack of people on the street. He stated NIDA cannot plan and execute plans for economic development meeting 1 hour per month. City Council meets roughly 4 hours per month with hardly any economic development discussion. We have no strategic plan or marketing plan to guide the City, Administration or NIDA for economic development within the City. We have no collective vision for the City for the next 10 years. Council has expressed interest in approving an ATV ordinance to improve downtown business traffic on weekends but it has not been passed. He believes an IDA/Tourism director position needs to be created and filled immediately. The City needs to reach out to the surrounding areas of Kingsport, Bristol, and Johnson City and market our assets downtown. I have been here 6 years and I am more discouraged today now that I am a downtown businessman and see nothing being done to make our downtown more successful.

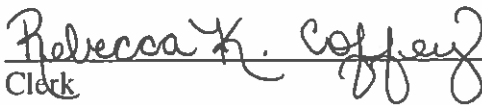
There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk

