

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, June 16, 2020, 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 Delores Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, and Jeffery Shupe, Finance Director

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

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Belcher, Fawbush NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the June 2, 2020, meeting as presented.

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

A public hearing was held to receive input on an ordinance adopting the city's FY 2020-2021 Budget.

Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, presented a brief synopsis of the 2020-2021 City of Norton Fiscal Budget, which totals \$10,045,524 in the General Operating Fund, and represents a decrease over last year's budget in the amount of \$235,276. The recommended budget includes a two percent cost of living (COLA) raise, salary step increases for qualifying employees, increased funding to Norton City Schools based upon Average Daily Membership (ADM) 775 students, an increase in workers compensation and health insurances, and increases to the regional jail and juvenile detention. The General Fund does not include any revenue enhancements but it does include \$125,000 in surplus funds to balance the budget. The General Fund presents a decrease in funding for paving and capital projects, and a decrease in funding to Norton Social Services in the amount of \$50,000. The Enterprise Fund totals \$3,340,482, which is an increase of \$78,126 over the FY20 budget. The Enterprise Fund does not include any proposed rate increases to the water and sewer rate schedules and projects a decrease in funding to the Coeburn-Norton-Wise Regional Wastewater Treatment Authority (CNW) and debt service due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the future, city administration recommends rate increases in the Enterprise budget in order to make the fund self-sufficient.

There being no comments from council, Mayor Fawbush opened the public hearing.

Receiving no public remarks, Mayor Fawbush closed the public hearing.

After a few comments from council members, Mayor Fawbush stated that the budget will be adopted at the June 30th special called council meeting.

A public hearing was held on an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Norton, Virginia Amending Chapter 12 – Mining and Control of Explosives of the Norton City Code.

Mr. Ramey said regulatory explosive controls have changed considerably since the city adopted the mining and explosives ordinance in 1977. He explained that regulatory enforcement now is done mostly by state and federal agencies. Mr. Ramey said when city administration began reviewing the ordinance for Project Intersection it was evident that the

ordinance needed updating to reflect current guidelines. He said an updated draft ordinance is included in council's packet for members' consideration.

There being no comments or questions from council, Mayor Fawbush opened the public hearing.

Receiving no public comments, Mayor Fawbush closed the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Norton, Virginia, Amending Chapter 12 – Mining and Control of Explosives of the Norton City Code as presented.

Mayor Fawbush noted the ordinance will go into effect after 30 days. (Insert)

The city manager advised that council held a public hearing on the Norton City Schools Proposed FY 2020-2021 Budget at their meeting on June 2nd, and council adopted the budget at that meeting. The city manager explained that council typically waits seven days after the public hearing to adopt the school budget, so tonight's council action will basically confirm the June 2nd adoption of the budget.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved confirm the adoption of the FY 2020-2021 budget for Norton City Schools in the amount of \$10,398,592, which will provide: Operational Funding in the amount of \$9,025,998, of which \$2,569,017 is to locally appropriated funds; the Textbook Fund in the amount of \$293,726, of which \$22,571 is locally appropriated funds; the Early Retirement Plan Fund in the amount of \$138,900; the Food Services Fund of \$842,437; and the Capital Project Fund of \$97,531.

The next agenda item was an update on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The city manager updated council with a PowerPoint presentation giving a brief update on activities in the city. He noted the increased usage of the city's drop box for city payments and said that city administration had processed 51 applications totaling \$247,500 for the "Norton Strong" Business Loan Pool. The city manager said city hall reopened June 8th, Flag Rock Recreation Area is completely open for camping, Norton Friends and Farmers Market held its first mini-market today, and the city hosted its first group mountain bike ride this year on June 9th. The city will host summer camps this year but with limited sizing and outdoor activities have started. The Independence Day celebration is scheduled Friday, July 3rd, with citizens being asked to continue social distancing. The city manager stated that several fall events have been cancelled, however, some organizers are still preparing to have modified events. He said going forward the city will continue to offer outdoor activities with limited participants.

Included in council's packets was a breakdown of the FY20 Budget Amendments.

Mr. Ramey said he is seeking council's authorization to advertise a public hearing on the amendments. The unappropriated reserves total \$387,900, additional revenues are \$1,012,750, and loan proceeds are \$20,800 for a total amount of \$1,421,450.

There being no questions from council, consensus of council to authorize the city manager to advertise a public hearing on the budget amendments to the 2019-2020 budget totaling \$1,421,450.

In council's packets for consideration was a request from Patricia Ann Hess of 5208 Spotswood Drive for one residential water and sewer tap. Mr. Ramey said the request is

outside city limits and must be approved by city council. He said the city's Water and Transmission Department (T&D) has checked for the availability of water and sewer at this site and both are available at this location.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to confirm the installation of one outside 5/8" water tap and one sewer tap for Ms. Patricia Ann Hess of 5208 Spotswood Drive.

Mr. Ramey confirmed the water and sewer taps are good for one year from the date of council approval.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a check to Anthem Health Plans of Virginia, Inc., dated June 1, 2020, in the amount of \$102,097 for payment of the monthly health insurance plan.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the check to Anthem Health Plans of Virginia, Inc., as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, and Belcher, 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.

Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

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

Mayor Fawbush 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 Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations to the Mountain Empire Community College Board for a four-year term to expire June 30, 2024.

Councilman Mays nominated Tim Cassell to be reappointed to the Mountain Empire Community College Board for a four-year term to expire June 30, 2024.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Tim Cassell reappointed to the Mountain Empire Community College Board.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said he anticipates that Norton Community Hospital will not be able to provide the assessment fee to city administration by June 30th so that council can take action on their request.

Mr. Ramey stated the contractor for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) is making progress on various crosswalks downtown.

He informed council that Norton Police Department was recently recognized with a plaque from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for not having any traffic fatalities in 2019.

Mr. Ramey advised the 2019 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report has been provided at each members' desk.

Mr. Ramey distributed the latest Retail Sales Tax Report to council.

Mr. Ramey told council that he provided members with copies of the latest traffic counts for High Knob and Flag Rock Recreation Area.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said the senior banners are up downtown and he has heard many positive remarks about the special graduation banner project. He stated that construction downtown is positive and reflects optimism for a better economic future. Councilman Fultz said senior yard signs were delivered to 2020 John I. Burton High School graduating seniors and graduation was held Saturday, June 13th. He noted he is pleased that the Norton Strong business loans are going well but he is concerned about the movie theatre and other stores which had to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Councilman Fultz said he is glad that Norton is having the fireworks display on July 3rd and he hopes school starts on time in the fall.

Councilwoman Belcher said she concurred with Councilman Fultz's comments and that the city's flower baskets downtown are beautiful.

Councilman Mays commented that he dined out for the first time since the closure of eating establishments due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that he thoroughly enjoyed his dining experience in the city.

Councilman Caruso stated that the city sales tax ended at the same level as last year because citizens did not buy into the COVID-19 pandemic hype. He said George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are opening all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails and multiple camping and day-use areas but he wanted to note to council that the Forest Service is opening ATV trails and shooting ranges at other locations of the forest, however, those recreational activities are not available in our local forest. Councilman Caruso stated that he has seen an increase in littering throughout the city and he would like for council to consider installing the "\$500 fine for littering" signs and begin ticketing offenders. He told council that the dumpster located at the Laurel Avenue trailer court was turned over by a bear and that the city needs to address this issue immediately. Councilman Caruso said he heard that Governor Ralph Northram has decided not to move the Commonwealth into Phase III of reopening the state.

Mr. Ramey stated he understands that Phase III has been moved back two weeks.

Councilman Caruso said LENOWISCO Health District is not publishing COVID-19 cases and he is displeased with LENOWISCO's performance. He said he is asking for an after-action investigation into LENOWISCO's lack of transparency and will put that request in writing. Councilman Caruso said he was advised that Wise County has three COVID-19 cases and the City of Norton has zero. He stated he completely supports Norton Police Department and its officers, and he has complete trust in their job performance. Councilman Caruso said he is happy that the city will be having the fireworks display on July 3rd, and that

the Kiwanis Club will not be having a pancake breakfast after the fireworks. He stated that if council agrees, the city should advertise and have the city-wide yard sale on Saturday, July 4th. Councilman Caruso asked about the status of the recently renovated Coca-Cola neon sign that has stopped working.

The city manager said he has contacted the company that repaired the sign and the company advised they would be in the city to assess the sign when they installed the Lyric Theatre sign in St. Paul.

Councilman Mays suggested acquiring a maintenance contract for the sign.

Councilman Caruso told council he is pleading with members to authorize the removal of plants and shrubs in the flat area on Tipple Hill that has overgrown with grass. He is asking that the area be reseeded with grass and two large flags be installed in that area.

Mayor Fawbush advised he attended the recent LENOWISCO Planning District Board meeting and the organization is doing well financially. He said due to recent emergency rescues at the Devil's Bathtub, that the LENOWISCO board member from Scott County is checking on the possibility of having cell service installed in that area. Mayor Fawbush suggested that the installation of trail markers identical to the ones used on Norton's trails would help with conformity. Mayor Fawbush also told the LENOWISCO Board that a sign needed to be installed at the entrance of the trail indicating the level of difficulty of the trail. He said he understands that the Clinch Coalition is upset that a private landowner is having his land timbered to install a horse park destination center. Mayor Fawbush said LENOWISCO has suggested that our area needs to be marketed in a way that highlights our region's low level of COVID-19 cases. He said that LENOWISCO is working on a WIFI project with Scott County Telephone for all towns to have free WIFI downtown beginning in July or August.

At this time, Councilman Fultz asked if council would be meeting on Tuesday, July 7th. It was the consensus of council to cancel the July 7th meeting since a June 30th meeting was scheduled.

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