

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Present: Joseph Fawbush, Robert Fultz, Jr., Mark Caruso, and William Mays

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, and Jeffery L. 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 Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of February 16, 2021, as presented.

A special presentation was made by Mayor Fawbush recognizing Councilwoman Delores Belcher who resigned as of January 31, 2021, due to a family illness.

Mayor Fawbush presented Councilwoman Belcher with a highlight of council's accomplishments during her tenure on council and thanked her for her service to the citizens of Norton. He expressed council's appreciation for her representation on various committees and boards and for her diligence serving on these agencies. Mayor Fawbush then presented Councilwoman Belcher with a handmade Norton mug by a local artisan Tricia Cahoon and a frame that included her photo and nameplate. A photo was taken with Mayor Fawbush and Councilwoman Belcher was honored with a standing ovation.

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

In their packets, council received a request from Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge for a Revocable Special Use Permit allowing use of a portion of Veterans Park.

Mr. Ramey presented a PowerPoint presentation showing the proposed area in Veterans Park that Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge would like to install two ground decks for use outside their business. He said if council is agreeable to the request, owners of the coffee lounge will need to come back to council after more research on obtaining a permit to serve alcohol on the proposed outside decks.

Mr. Blake Salyer, co-owner of Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge, presented a PowerPoint presentation depicting the design of the two ground decks and said the area would look identical to Zest Catering's deck for a cohesive look. He said the finished project will include a railing and a side entrance from the park into the coffee lounge. Mr. Salyer said the decks will be built around the existing trees but the shrubs will be removed and additional lighting will probably need to be installed. He said the coffee lounge will need to get permission from the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority (ABC) to add to their current license of serving alcohol on/off premises to include serving alcohol on the outside decks while hosting events for the community.

Mr. Ramey added that tonight's request is for the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to work with Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge, the city attorney, and ABC Authority on researching the request. He said once the research is completed the Mr. Salyer would return to council asking permission to use the space, build the two decks, and to use the space for this specific use.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to work with Lincoln Road Coffee Lounge, the city attorney, and the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority on this request.

Norton Parks and Recreation Director Michele Knox presented her annual overview of events and special activities.

Ms. Knox first introduced Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Rebecca Iozzi and said she has been with the department since the end of August. Via a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Knox discussed the classes and activities that were held in 2020 and said the year started out very different due to COVID-19. She brought several Trash to Treasures class-created items and told council that several classes such as yoga and senior exercise classes had to be postponed because of the coronavirus. Ms. Knox said 19 summer camps were scheduled this year but only two camps were held because of the pandemic. She also said the department made videos to show kids crafts they could do at home and the city had a successful Independence Day fireworks celebration.

Ms. Iozzo added that 200 treat bags were given out for the Halloween Bash in the Park along with the annual costume contest. Ms. Knox said Norton Parks and Recreation Department participated in the annual Christmas tree display at the Southwest Virginia Museum, held Santa Station downtown in lieu of the Christmas parade, promoted a downtown storefront Christmas decorating contest, and had social distanced farmers markets. Ms. Knox advised that park shelter rentals were down in 2020, but 16 states were represented in the Flag Rock Recreation Area camping sites. She discussed the various environmental activities and recycling efforts the department participates in throughout the year and said the department received a \$5,608 grant from the Department of Environmental Quality for litter prevention and recycling programs. Ms. Knox said the department held its first storm drain art contest and noted that a bench was placed outside the community center by the Bandy family honoring the late Martin "Marty" Bandy, who loved and visited Norton each summer and volunteered to help with many city activities. Ms. Knox then presented photos of renovations at the community center and stated the Girl Scouts had placed a pantry for kids at the community center and the Lonesome Pine Library had placed a locker at the community center for citizens to check out and return library books. She said Parks and Recreation employee David Rose designed and built brochure boxes that will be installed at Flag Rock Recreation Area and other sites promoting all Norton has to offer in outdoor recreation.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Ms. Knox for the many activities, programs, and outdoor recreation her department provides the citizens of Norton each year.

Next on council's agenda was a request for authorization to submit a grant application to renew the school resource officer (SRO) position at Norton Elementary and Middle School (NEMS).

The city manager advised that the high school cannot apply for grant funding for an SRO and stated that the school board is funding the SRO position at Burton High School. He asked Norton Police Chief James Lane to share statistics about the SRO position at NEMS.

Chief Lane told council the SRO patrols the school campus, completes a daily report, and conducts training for students and staff. He said last year 260 students and staff participated in training and he advised what types of issues the department tracks and investigates, if needed. Chief Lane said the SRO is required to come by the office before and after school and this allows for improved communication between the SRO, administration, and officers on duty. He said if

the SRO is out of school other officers provide campus walk-throughs and this allows all officers to learn the layout of the school and have a better understanding of the building. Chief Lane said the SRO is building a rapport with staff and students and the position has been positive.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to authorize the city manager to submit a grant application to renew the school resource officer position at Norton Elementary and Middle School.

Mr. Ramey provided an update on COVID-19 cases and funding on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Ramey stated that the city had an increase of one COVID-19 case and he noted that the total number of cases in the city continues to decrease. He reported that Wise County's numbers are starting to level but had an increase of 105 new cases since the last council meeting. Mr. Ramey then shared the total number of vaccinations on the local, state, and national levels.

Mr. Ramey reported no changes in the CARES Act funding but the House had approved the Stimulus Bill and it moves to the Senate. He said the Stimulus Bill includes money for local governments and possibly additional funding with more flexibility. He said a drawdown of \$109,000 was received from the LENOWISCO Small Business Recovery Assistance Program but no city businesses received funding from this drawdown and that the deadline for round 5 funding is March 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Ramey told council the city applied \$9,111.88 to 24 water accounts from the CARES funding under the Municipal Utility Relief Program and it is likely there may be another round of funding.

Next on council's agenda was an update on the 2021 Norton Business Challenge.

Mr. Ramey stated that he was a little disappointed because only two applications have been received for this year's challenge but he is expecting two additional applications. Mr. Ramey said once the other applications are received a date will be scheduled to start the challenge.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a check to Norton Industrial Development Authority, dated December 18, 2020, in the amount of \$131,250 for the transfer of CARES Act funding.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT - None, council moved to confirm the check to Norton Industrial Development Authority, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Caruso, and Fawbush, 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 Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting.  
(Insert)

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for two nominations to the Norton Rescue Squad Board of Directors for a one-year term to expire February 1, 2022.

Councilman Caruso nominated Delores Belcher and William Mays to be reappointed to the Norton Rescue Squad Board of Directors for a one-year term to expire February 1, 2022.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote with Councilman Mays abstaining, council moved that the nominations cease.

Mayor Fawbush declared Delores Belcher and William Mays to be reappointed to the Norton Rescue Squad Board of Directors for a one-year term to expire February 1, 2022.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire February 18, 2026.

Councilman Mays nominated Andy Belcher to be reappointed to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire February 18, 2026.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Andy Belcher reappointed to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire February 18, 2026.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for a motion to fill the vacancy on city council.

Councilman Fultz nominated and made a motion to appoint Sarah Davis to fill the vacancy on city council until December 31, 2021.

The nomination and motion were seconded by Councilman Mays, and were passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved that the nominations cease.

Mayor Fawbush declared Sarah Davis appointed to fill the vacancy on city council until December 31, 2021.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey distributed a copy of the Water Plant Water Quality Fluoridation Award.

The city manager said the city attorney had reviewed and approved the Revocable Special Use Permit and Indemnification Agreement for Benchmark Gunsmithing to use the city's firing range and that he anticipates the permit to be executed within the next few days.

Mr. Ramey stated that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an Equitable and Competitive Data Center Equipment Tax Rate and Depreciation Schedule to be implemented within the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) region has been approved by all member localities and Commissioners of Revenue and that a copy of the press release was on their desk.

The city manager said Cloudsplitter Organizer Susan Howell sent him a link to an online article that listed the Cloudsplitter 100 Ultra Trail race as one of the nine most popular ultra-marathons runners should know about in 2021.

He provided council with monthly Financial Reports and the latest High Knob traffic counts. Mr. Ramey asked council to review their calendars and email him available dates so a workshop can be scheduled in early March.

The city manager told council their workshop for project updates is scheduled for Saturday March 13th, from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz stated that at the last council meeting members recognized first responders and inspected the rescue squad vehicle. Several days after that meeting the city had three significant emergency events in inclement weather and he noticed all the city's emergency departments and personnel responded. He is just reminded how fortunate the city is to have dedicated citizens taking care of city business and meeting the needs of our citizens.

Councilman Caruso asked the city manager to ensure that the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) receives a copy of the RIFA MOU.

The city manager said he would follow up with the executive director of VEDP.

Councilman Caruso echoed Councilman Fultz's comments on the city's emergency personnel.

Mayor Fawbush said the city is blessed to have great public safety personnel and he thanked them for their service to the city.

He reiterated that council will meet for a workshop on Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

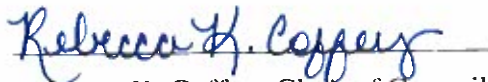
There being no further business to come before council, Mayor Fawbush declared the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council