

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, March 3, 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 followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

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

25434

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

25435

Bonnie Elosser, a representative of the Pro-Art Association was present to give Council an update on their activities. Prior to the meeting, she placed hand-outs at each Council member's desk. She advised that the organization was solvent and in a good financial position. She advised that they had received a \$30,000 grant from the Gilliam Foundation and are using it to bring Barter Theater Shows to our area. They continue to hold and administer the JAMS Program at the Norton Elementary and Middle School with an enrollment of 35. She had talked with Dr. Perrigan, Norton City Schools Superintendent, about seeking a grant to remodel the auditorium at J. I. Burton and also do some repairs on their piano.

25436

She expressed her thanks to the City for their continuous support throughout the years and advised that their group has received more funds locally than any other area in the State of Virginia and that this matching fund program is the only program that the Virginia Commission of the Arts has not cut.

Mayor Mays thanked Ms. Elosser for her presentation and advised that action had been taken on this matching grant at their previous meeting.

Mr. Glenn "Skip" Skinner, Executive Director of the LENOWISCO Planning District, was present tonight and spoke to Council advising that this month marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first formal meeting of the LENOWISCO Economic Development District. He further spoke of the economic situation that Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and the City of Norton are experiencing. Each of the participating entities' IDA/EDA Boards have worked diligently to attract new businesses; however the region has no central comprehensive economic development model.

A Virginia Tech Survey stated that our region's population is aging, more workers are leaving the region, educational attainment continues to be low overall, and we are losing jobs in industries with higher average earning occupations. Jobs are declining, both in coal and manufacturing, and it is a challenge to find qualified workers with the significant drug abuse problem in the area.

He listed five things that could be done to overcome the Appalachian stereotype that has been placed on us and made fundamental recommendations. One of those was that leaders need to be pro-active and that tourism could help greatly with bringing in revenue and visitors to the area. He advised he is not requesting anything tonight, but is in the process of making this presentation to all entities in their service area. He asked that Council think about his presentation and that he will be back in the future with some further ideas on correcting the situation.

25437

Councilman Caruso advised he would like to have a copy of the briefing presented tonight and also a copy of the Virginia Tech Study. He advised that the initial task is that of positive competent leadership and that he applauded LENOWISCO for doing this study. Changes need to be made from the bottom up and, in his opinion, the baseline needs to be changed.

Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Skinner for this presentation and Mr. Skinner advised he would be available for any questions or comments. He then thanked Council for their attention tonight.

In their packets, Council had been given an Emergency Declaration for the 2015 Snow Event.

Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, showed Council photographs of various scenes throughout the City during the past snow events. He stated he was extremely proud of City employees for the job they had done during the past two weeks. With 14" of snow on February 16<sup>th</sup>, extreme 18 degrees below zero weather, and an additional 12"-16" of snow on February 21<sup>st</sup>, employees have worked 24 hours a day – 7 days a week since this began. The Governor declared an emergency on February 16th for the State and the City declared the same on Sunday, February 22, 2015 and submitted requests to Virginia Department of Emergency Management for various equipment and operators and received them the next morning. The contractor for our Phase III Water Improvement Project had already stationed some of his equipment in the City and they were contracted to help clear snow downtown. Some snow banks were 3' high. The main concern was, once melted, flooding would occur in the down town area. Equipment failure and the amount of snow limited the City's ability to adequately manage the situation.

25438

The Public Works Department made a request that a contractor in the Abingdon area provide two backhoes with operators and trucks to help with the road clearing efforts in the Park Avenue area. Once in the City, these trucks worked the entire week, clearing the Park Avenue area and trucking the snow to staging areas within the downtown area. Mr. Ramey advised that the City had a lack of equipment to handle the event plus experienced multiple breakdowns. Another vendor was secured through the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) to clear back streets.

The City Manager advised of the work done by Todd Lagow, the City's Emergency Services Coordinator, who sought and received bottled water and heater meals for residents.

Mr. Ramey advised of the actions of various City departments as relating to the weather related incidents as well as challenges faced by our Public Works employees with snow removal, water leaks, and garbage pick-ups. He then advised that the City

Shop sustained a partial roof collapse which required some relocation of equipment, the Norton Rescue Squad building had damage to guttering being pulled away from the building roof, and a damaged backhoe resulting from sliding over a hill. A major water leak occurred and, after locating, the source was repaired. Water was purchased from Big Stone Gap for two days.

He then advised of property damage to private property within the City.

An After-Action-Review will be held with department heads regarding this event to see if there are any areas for us to improve our services in the wake of future events.

Councilman Fawbush advised that the City Manager and his staff did a wonderful job during this event and kept City Council well informed.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to adopt an Emergency Declaration for the 2015 Snow Event. (Insert)

Council had been given a copy of the City of Norton Emergency Operation Plan for their review.

Mr. Ramey advised that the Virginia State Code requires municipalities to have such a plan and the governing body needs to review it every four years. He advised that the City staff has looked this plan over and sent it to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. It has been sent back, updated, and then given to Council for adoption. The City does conduct annual changes on this plan.

25439

In his comments, Councilman Caruso advised he would like to table this item until he has had time to read it in its entirety. He also advised there is no chain of command and Council is not listed. Also, page numbers should be added.

Mayor Mays advised there is a time crunch; however once adopted, small changes can be made.

Following a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the City of Norton Emergency Operation Plan. (Insert)

Council had a copy of a check made payable to the Norton Industrial Development Authority in the amount of \$122,004.25 for approval.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to approve a check in the amount of \$122,004.25 payable to the Norton Industrial Development Authority.

25440

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

Since Council's last meeting, there have been three positive articles in the local and regional press covering the Rock Climbing Memorandum of Understanding with the SVCC and the Access Fund. He has provided copies to each Council member.

25441

The first Capital Improvement Workshop will be this Saturday at 9:00 a.m. and the second is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at which time Council photos will be done prior to the meeting.

At Council's previous meeting, he shared a brochure about the AirMed (Wings Air Rescue) Membership Program. Their representative advised that he will be willing to meet with Council at a future date to provide more information about the program.

There were no comments from the City Attorney.

25442

In comments from Council:

Councilman Caruso advised that the future of the City is up to leadership and the direction is on Council's back. There needs to be a vision of where to go and to develop this working with the County and the various planning district groups. He gave a brief update on the Norton Rescue Squad and he is very pleased and they are headed in the right direction.

Councilman Fultz thanked the City Manager for the Air-Med applications which he will share both at J. I. Burton High School and with family and friends. With this being his third council meeting, he is impressed by the amount of work, dexterity of work, and how well employees work together. This weather situation was handled very well and he commends all departments and staff, the City Manager and office staff, social services, and all other entities that worked to get the City through this week.

25443

Councilman Fawbush advised he would like to commend all emergency service agencies. He stated citizens need to understand what living in the City means and the services they are provided. Mr. Ramey and City employees are to be applauded for the work done during this weather situation.

Councilwoman Belcher stated that before she began serving on Council, she had no idea of the many roles it takes to run the City and advised that she feels fortunate and appreciative.

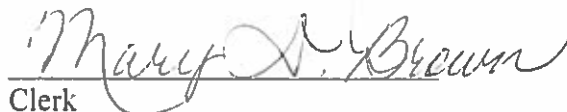
Mayor Mays echoed the sentiments of all Council members regarding the weather events and asked that Council keep the family of Ruby Coffey in their thoughts as she passed away this evening.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA

  
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Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Clerk