

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, February 5, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Present: Robert Fultz, Jr., Joseph Fawbush, Mark Caruso, and Delores Belcher

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

Absent: William Mays

The invocation was given by Pastor Roger Sloce and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Fire Chief Todd Lagow.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following vote: YES – Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – Mays, council moved to adopt the minutes of the January 15, 2019, meeting as presented.

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

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Mark Leonard, Ballard Heath Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of hospitals in the City of Norton and Wise and Dickenson Counties, presented a local health update. He said since the merger between Wellmont Health Systems and Mountain States Health Alliance, Ballard has focused on unifying their culture by sharing dual responsibilities and that his position is an example of that philosophy. Mr. Leonard stated the organization is committed to maintaining rural hospitals and facilities and noted that in 2018, Ballard invested a total of 2.2 million dollars in hospitals in Wise County and the City of Norton. He also said in reviewing area hospitals that health outcomes did not match the level of service hospitals were reportedly giving patients. Mr. Leonard shared that some health issues in Southwest Virginia were six times the state average and that these statistics are daunting for Ballard facilities and providers.

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At this time, Councilman William Mays took his seat on council.

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Mr. Leonard also addressed Ballard's decision to change the current number of level one trauma centers in the region. He said Johnson City Medical Center (JCMC) will remain the only level one trauma center in the region and that two additional emergency room pediatric departments will be established with one at Holston Valley Medical Center (HVMC) in Kingsport, Tennessee and one at Bristol Regional Medical Center (BRMC) in Bristol, Tennessee. Mr. Leonard advised the decision to reduce the number of level one trauma centers would affect an average 260 trauma cases each year and that these incidences would be treated at JCMC. He went on to share that Ballard will continue to work with area rescue squads and medical flight services to transport patients to medical facilities and that the on-site emergency commander will make the decision on how a patient should be transported and to which hospital. Mr. Leonard said in moving forward, Ballard plans to demolish the old Saint Mary's Hospital in Norton and has contracted with

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DH Griffith for demolition. He said once demolition is completed the location will be a level, grass-seeded lot with a portion of the remaining asphalt parking lot.

After a brief discussion and Councilman William Mays advocating for Ballard to consider constructing tennis courts or a water park on the old Saint Mary's Hospital property, Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Leonard for the update and for Ballard being valuable community partners.

The next agenda item was an update on Norton Rescue Squad by Chief Operating Officer (COO) Todd Lagow.

Prior to Mr. Lagow's presentation, the city manager discussed the historical relationship between the city and Norton Rescue Squad (NRS) and noted many people have worked to turn around the financial status of NRS. Mr. Ramey shared 2017 statistical data with council showing that emergency calls had increased, Bingo has yet to show monetary improvements, and that NRS has ended on a positive financial status three out of the last four years.

Mr. Todd Lagow thanked council, the city manager, the city's finance director, and the Norton Rescue Squad Board of Directors for their involvement to turn around the financial status of Norton Rescue Squad. He said the squad began revenue recovery in 2008 and 2009 by billing emergency calls to diversify funding. Mr. Lagow said this action proved to be a valuable decision because the organization experienced a \$50,000 revenue decrease in 2010, and an even greater loss in 2013. He stated NRS's financial instability, a lack of volunteers, and many other factors led the organization to almost bankruptcy by 2014. Mr. Lagow said in 2015, the city entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NRS and this action set in motion the turnaround of NRS's finances. He said the squad has developed a budget and the city is performing all accounting duties for the organization. He said NRS received two grants to purchase a 2019 ambulance and a Lucas device. He noted NRS's local cost to purchase the 2019 ambulance is \$37,000, and that he hopes to pay the local cost share with Bingo monies. Mr. Lagow went on to share future needs, challenges, and struggles of the organization and he thanked board member Mark Leonard and Ballard for their assistance and helping Norton Rescue Squad.

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Councilman Caruso and Councilman Fultz commended the NRS Board of Directors and Mr. Lagow for turning around NRS's financial situation.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Lagow and his staff for their work with NRS and for the level of service NRS offers Norton citizens.

Council had been presented with a Proclamation Declaring 2019 the 125th Anniversary of the City of Norton.

Mr. Ramey said on February 15, 1894, Norton was incorporated as a town by the Virginia General Assembly. He provided each council member with a copy of the 1894 Acts of Assembly.

At this time, Mr. Ramey also mentioned that he wanted to recognize Ms. Robbie Tate, who passed away earlier that day. He said Ms. Tate was the chairperson of the city's Centennial Steering Committee and she was instrumental in the success of the yearlong celebration when the city observed its 100th anniversary in 1994.

Mr. Ramey went on to say he would like to increase the fireworks display for the city's Independence Day celebration and he has talked with the Best Friend Festival Committee about incorporating activities into this year's festival to highlight the city's 125th

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anniversary. He also said city administration would like to purchase seals noting the 125th Anniversary to place on city envelopes and other documents to highlight the occasion. Mr. Ramey also noted that this year is the 45th Anniversary of the dedication of Flag Rock and that he will place the Flag Rock commemoration on a later agenda for discussion.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt the Proclamation Declaring 2019 the 125th Anniversary of the City of Norton. (Insert)

In packets for council consideration was a check to the Wise County Treasurer, dated November 1, 2018, in the amount of \$231,826.98, to cover shared services.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the check to the Wise County Treasurer, as stated above.

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Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous 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.

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Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

The city attorney was excused at this time.

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

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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.

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Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, 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 nominations to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire January 17, 2024.

Councilman Mays nominated Joe Buchanan to be reappointed to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire January 17, 2024.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Joe Buchanan reappointed to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire January 17, 2024.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for two nominations to the Norton Redevelopment and Housing Authority for a four-year term each to expire January 28, 2023.

Councilwoman Belcher nominated Renee Robinson and T.J. Flanary to be reappointed to the Norton Redevelopment and Housing Authority for a four-year term each to expire January 28, 2023.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Renee Robinson and T. J. Flanary reappointed to the Norton Redevelopment and Housing Authority for a four-year term each to expire January 28, 2023.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for four nominations to the Norton Highway Safety Committee for a two-year term each to expire January 31, 2021.

Councilman Fultz nominated Steve McElroy, Joshua Ball, Gary Call, and Cody McElroy to be reappointed to the Norton Highway Safety Committee for a two-year term each to expire January 31, 2021.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Steve McElroy, Joshua Ball, Gary Call, and Cody McElroy to be reappointed to the Norton Highway Safety Committee for a two-year term each to expire January 31, 2021.

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations to the Southwest Virginia Emergency Medical Service Council for a two-year term to expire January 31, 2021.

Councilman Caruso nominated Todd Lagow to be reappointed to the Southwest Virginia Emergency Medical Service Council for a two-year term to expire January 31, 2021.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Todd Lagow to be reappointed to the Southwest Virginia Emergency Medical Service Council for a two-year term to expire January 31, 2021.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said the city received a funding request from Norton Youth Sports Foundation and he handed out copies of the application to council members. They want to replace the football equipment this year for youth league football and they have not requested a specific amount. He said in order to receive the equipment by fall it has to be ordered early and they can't wait until the budget process. Mr. Ramey asked council's direction on handling the funding request.

Council requested that the organization come to the next council meeting to explain the organization's goal and purpose for youth sports.

Mr. Ramey thanked everyone for their assistance in getting the annual disclosure statements turned in to the clerk.

The city's first Outdoor Hiking Chat was held and 17 people participated.

He distributed Norton Parks and Recreation February Events Calendars to council.

He gave each council member a copy of the latest monthly financials and a copy of a blog post that mentions Norton titled "Mountain Biking is Booming in Appalachia – But What Does It Take to Get Trails Built?" that appeared on REI.com.

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Mr. Ramey said council received an invitation to attend Eagle Scout Court in honor of Daniel Rose of Boy Scout Troop 301, who worked to establish Bark Camp Lake as a Dark

Skies Designation. Mr. Ramey said if council wants to present Mr. Rose with a plaque at the ceremony, he can have one prepared honoring Mr. Rose's achievements.

Council was of consensus to have Mr. Ramey prepare a plaque to be presented to Mr. Rose at the Eagle Scout Court.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Caruso said he was alarmed at the health and opioid statistics Mark Leonard of Ballad Health shared tonight, and he hopes that Ballad can help remedy this serious problem.

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Councilman Caruso encouraged council to consider a public/private partnership to help advance the idea of a Ballad – Saint Mary's Health Park on the old hospital property.

Councilman Mays commented that Ms. Robbie Tate was a major contributor to the city for many years and asked the city manager to send the city's condolences.

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Councilman Fultz asked the date for council's next workshop.

Mr. Ramey advised he is waiting on some statistics before scheduling a date but the tentative timeframe is end of February or first of March.

Councilman Fultz commented that it seems as though city projects and improvements are crawling along.

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In addressing Councilman Fultz's comment, Mr. Ramey informed members that the Norton Industrial Development Authority met last night and the authority took some major steps in moving forward with Project Apple.

Mayor Fawbush informed council that the dialog between Norton City Council and Norton City School Board is good. Initial discussions were held and each shared their concerns and challenges. Mayor Fawbush said he is hopeful that the discussions will continue in the upcoming months and the budget process nears.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council