

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, February 19, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Present: William Mays, Fultz, Jr., Joseph Fawbush, and Delores Belcher

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

Absent: Mark Caruso

The invocation was given by Pastor Ken Taylor 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 vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – Caruso, council moved to adopt the minutes of the February 5, 2019, meeting as presented.

262972

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

262973

Council had been presented with a completed City of Norton Donation Policy packet and a donation request from Norton Youth Sports Foundation (NYSF).

The city manager said he invited NYSF President Danny Culbertson to attend the meeting to explain the request and mission of the organization.

Mr. Culbertson said NYSF was created in 2018 for the purpose of helping all youth sports programs in the City of Norton, and that NYSF was not connected to any specific sports group. He advised council NYSF obtained 501(c)(3) non-profit organizational status in order to improve the group's funding position with local businesses and national youth sports sponsors such as the National Football League (NFL). Mr. Culbertson said the foundation mailed support letters for the upcoming season and so far Ballad Health and Lane Engineering have confirmed they will be sponsors in 2019. He said the foundation has also applied to NFL program to replace Norton Youth League Football's aging equipment and he expects to hear at the end of March if their application has been approved.

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After a brief discussion and on behalf of council, Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Culbertson for his efforts in working with Norton youth and for contacting other organizations to help support Norton youth sports programs. Mayor Fawbush advised Mr. Culbertson that council will consider NYSF's request during the budget process.

The next agenda item was a presentation by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) District Wildlife Biologist Seth Thompson regarding bear population reduction programs currently being considered by DGIF.

Mr. Ramey said Mr. Thompson contacted him last year and advised DGIF is researching alternative opportunities to deal with the bear issues in the region and he will provide an update on these options and make recommendations for council to consider.

Mr. Thompson told council that 2018 was the worst year for bear calls at DGIF offices and the increase in calls was the result of a natural bear food failure last year. He said the lack of a natural food supply caused the bears to look for other food sources resulting in

262975

their ever growing appearance in the city. Mr. Thompson said because the bears have become accustomed to the high calorie food source in and around the city they are not leaving and the area has become a refuge. He said a growing number of cities and towns are allowing archery hunting to manage whatever game issue the locality is experiencing. Mr. Thompson said each locality can set rules and regulations for their jurisdiction and he recommends council consider allowing archery hunting in the city limits. He said several areas within the city present a safe and appropriate area to allow this activity and they include Flag Rock Recreation, the land behind the former Magic Mart site, Whitaker Farm, and the power line right-a-way from Norton to Wise. Mr. Thompson said every two years DGIF has a regulation cycle to determine what changes need to be made to hunting regulations. He said DGIF's statewide Bear Committee approved an open bear season for fall 2019, and their recommendation has been forwarded to the DGIF Board for consideration and approval. In addition, Mr. Thompson said he hopes the Bear Population Reduction Program, or BPOP that is being discussed separate from the regulation cycle will be an added option for the city to implement, if the DGIF Board approves. He explained the city could request a number of BPOP tags to issue to hunters and they could be used outside the hunting season whenever the city is having bear issues.

After Mr. Thompson's presentation and discussion with council, Mr. Ramey asked Mr. Thompson if he could provide sample policies or ordinances of other localities that had allowed hunting within their corporate limits, especially localities that used BPOP tags.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Thompson for the update and said council looks forward to receiving information to consider their options.

Included in council's packets for consideration was a draft Moral Obligation Resolution in Support of a Norton Industrial Development Authority Project.

The city manager said the moral obligation is tied to the downtown revitalization project that started about two years ago. Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, provided council an overview of the process that began with the city's comprehensive downtown planning process. He said after that process, the city received a \$700,000 downtown revitalization grant through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the city has been actively working on streetscape improvement projects downtown. Mr. Ramey advised that the bid packet to completely develop the Norton Friends and Farmers Market building into the Norton Expo Center and the Gateway Project planned at the corner of Route 74 and 5th Street is 90 percent complete and will be advertised in March for bids. He said they are also looking at adding additional decorative street lighting at 11th Street going up toward the viaduct and possibly replacing the light poles on the viaduct with similar lights that are being used downtown. Mr. Ramey said the next project is the restaurant and cidery that is planned for a portion of the farmers' market building and that the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA) has been working with the city on this revitalization project. He explained NIDA will be taking on the debt for the purpose of developing a restaurant and cidery and an event center at 815 Park Avenue, S.W., for which the lending company will require a moral obligation from city council. Mr. Ramey said, at this time, he is requesting council's consideration to authorize the city attorney and the city manager to work with NIDA and a lending institution on a moral obligation to finance this project up to \$750,000.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to

authorize City Attorney William Bradshaw and City Manager Fred Ramey to work with the Norton Industrial Development Authority and a lending agency to finance up to \$750,000 for the project located at 815 Park Avenue, S.W.

Council had been presented in their packets with a Resolution Recognizing February 16th – 19th as National Entrepreneurship Week.

Mr. Ramey said he thought it was a good opportunity for the city to join in recognizing National Entrepreneurship Week as part of the city's downtown revitalization project. He said the city has a goal of conducting a second Norton Business Challenge and city administration is asking individuals, through the city's social media, to complete an application to gauge interest. Mr. Ramey said he is also working on another state grant application that, if awarded, would allow the city to participate in another business plan competition later this year or early next year and the grant would increase the funding award over past business challenges.

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Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt the Resolution Recognizing February 16th – 19th as National Entrepreneurship Week. (Insert)

In packets for council consideration was a transfer to Norton City Schools, dated November 27, 2018, in the amount of \$200,000, to cover November 2018 payroll expenditures.

262978

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the transfer to Norton City Schools, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to go into closed meeting to consult with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (8) of the Code of Virginia, as amended.

262979

Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

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

262980

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.

262981

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

In comments from the city manager:

A copy of the latest Retail Sales Tax Report has been placed at each member's desk.

262982

Mr. Ramey reminded council about the invitation to attend an Eagle Scout Court of Honor for Daniel Rose of Boy Scout Troop 301. He said a plaque from the city recognizing Daniel's efforts can be presented to him by council at that time.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilwoman Belcher said she hopes to attend the Eagle Scout Court of Honor recognizing Daniel Rose.

Councilwoman Belcher commented since the last meeting she has been thinking about the statistics Mr. Mark Leonard of Ballad Health shared regarding 30 percent of babies born in our area are addicted to drugs. She asked members what council could do to help end this crisis.

262983

Councilman Fultz said he saw the Norton Business Challenge on Facebook and he is glad to see that the city is seeking to do another challenge.

He said he appreciates Seth Thompson providing an update on the bear situation and noted the diminished food supply has intensified the problem.

Councilman Fultz said in reviewing the Sales Tax Report eight months into the fiscal year that the revenues on average are as low as eight years ago, but city is continuing to provide the same level of services and paying more to provide those same public services. However, he does expect it to turn around and he is grateful for the things happening in the city.

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Mayor Fawbush congratulated Michelle Jenkins, Congressman Morgan Griffith's district director, for being elected as the juvenile and domestic relations judge in the 30th Judicial District.

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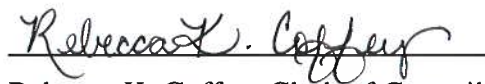
There being no further business to come before council, the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council