

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, February 18, 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

The invocation was given by Pastor Gary Hill and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilman seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Fawbush, Caruso, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the February 4, 2020, meeting as corrected. In Councilman Caruso's comments the word and number "over 10,000" should have read "tens of thousands."

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

City Council was presented with a request to allow the placement of an MIA/POW Memorial in Veterans Park.

Mr. Ramey presented a PowerPoint presentation showing the proposed location and design of an MIA/POW Memorial. Mr. Ramey said he spoke with Ben A. Foy, Jr., about the project a couple months ago and that Mr. Foy was in attendance to discuss the project with council members.

Mr. Foy said when he visited Norton two years ago he went by Veterans Park and decided this would be a good location for an MIA/POW Memorial. He told council that Rolling Thunder, Inc., Chapter 4 of Tennessee (Rolling Thunder, Inc., TN4), of which he is a board member, has placed 25 MIA/POW memorials throughout the region. Mr. Foy said except for a 4-foot concrete slab, all other materials for the memorial would be provided by Rolling Thunder, Inc., TN4. He told council that he proposes that the MIA/POW Memorial be placed in the front section of Veterans Park to the left of the Veterans Memorial facing Park Avenue. Mr. Foy informed council that once installation is complete the city will be responsible for maintenance. He said he would like to have the project finished and unveiled on Memorial Day. Mr. Foy said the memorial would be a great addition to the city park and that Rolling Thunder, Inc., TN4, would provide an MIA/POW flag to be flown

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to approve the request to place an MIA/POW Memorial in Veterans Park with Rolling Thunder, Inc., Chapter 4 of Tennessee, providing all materials for the memorial with the exception of a 4-foot concrete slab which shall be provided by the city.

At this time, Councilman Caruso suggested that the city execute a resolution or proclamation in support of the MIA/POW Memorial for the unveiling.

On behalf of council, Mayor Fawbush thanked Mr. Foy for his hard work on this project and for his dedication to the MIA/POW program.

The next agenda item was an overview of the 2019 Parks and Recreation events and activities which was presented by Norton Parks and Recreation Director Michele Knox.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Knox provided council members with a synopsis of the events and activities provided by the department in 2019. She shared with council the various classes held at the Community Center, special activities, summer camps, environmental classes, recycling efforts, and park and shelter information. Ms. Knox said the department collected \$3,695 for Community Center rental fees, \$9,310 in Flag Rock Recreation Area rental fees, and \$920 in Park Shelter rental fees. She noted that the fireworks display for last year's Independence Day celebration went well and many citizens commented on how good the display was for 2019. Ms. Knox said there were nine different camps held for kids in 2019 with a total of 255 campers. She told council Parks and Recreation received a litter prevention grant in the amount of \$4,883 from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and that the department placed cigarette collection cans downtown, participated in The Great American Cleanup, held the annual Clean Poster Contest at Norton Elementary and Middle School, and collected 37,120 pounds or 18.56 tons of recyclables for the year. Ms. Knox told council the department had Senior Intern Ricara Moorman from Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, for seven weeks and noted that Ms. Moorman assisted with the Best Friend Festival and the farmers market, and conducted a theatre camp. Ms. Knox noted she is working on getting donations for upcoming 2020 programs and the department had received a large donation from Ballard Health.

Mr. Ramey commented that Norton is one of only two communities that provides a Parks and Recreation Department for its citizens. The city manager said Ms. Knox works really hard and he appreciates the work she does for Norton citizens and youth.

After a brief discussion, Mayor Fawbush thanked Ms. Knox for the report.

Mr. Ramey provided council with an update on the 2020 Norton Business Challenge Competition.

Mr. Ramey, via a PowerPoint presentation, gave council an overview of past business challenges beginning with the Southwest Virginia Opportunity Challenge in 2013. He told council that the city's first business challenge was held in 2016 and that the purpose of his presentation was to roll out Norton's upcoming business challenge. Mr. Ramey noted that the 2020 business challenge contains a stipulation that the winner of the challenge must locate their business in a storefront in the downtown business district. He informed council that the 2020 Norton Business Challenge is being funded by a \$45,000 Community Business Launch Grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Norton Industrial Development Authority (NIDA). Mr. Ramey then explained the requirements of this year's challenge, and he said the first class begins on March 25th.

Council had been presented in their packets with a resolution recognizing February 15th – 22nd as National Entrepreneurship Week.

Mr. Ramey said this is the second year that council has recognized National Entrepreneurship Week and the resolution ties directly into the city's efforts to promote entrepreneurship within the city. He told council he felt with the city's business challenge ready to begin in March the timing is appropriate to bring this resolution before council for consideration.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt the resolution recognizing February 15th – 22nd as National Entrepreneurship Week. (Insert)

Included in packets for council consideration was a transfer to Norton City Schools, dated January 21, 2020, in the amount of \$250,000.00 to cover January 24, 2020 payroll expenditures.

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

At this time, Mayor Fawbush recognized five University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA-Wise) students who were in attendance at the meeting. He asked each of them to introduce themselves, state their hometown, and share their purpose for attending the meeting. The students came from throughout the state to attend college in Wise and they came to tonight's meeting because several of them are interested in government.

After a brief discussion, student Katie Akin, of Purcellville, Virginia, thanked the city for its recycling program and told council that Flag Rock Recreation Area and High Knob were great investments. Mr. Ramey then provided the students with trail maps, 2020 Event Calendars, and other information about Flag Rock Recreation Area and High Knob to share with other UVA-Wise students.

Mayor Fawbush thanked the students for attending the meeting and noted council likes to see people involved in local government.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, 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 Mays, 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 of a parent representative to the Norton Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT).

Councilman Caruso nominated Nikki McElroy to be appointed as the parent representative to the Norton Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT).

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Nikki McElroy appointed as the parent representative to the Norton Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT).

Mayor Fawbush opened the floor for nominations to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire February 18, 2025.

Councilwoman Belcher nominated Stephen McElroy to be reappointed to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire February 18, 2025.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Stephen McElroy to be reappointed to the Building Code Board of Appeals for a five-year term to expire February 18, 2025.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey advised council there would be a public hearing on the March 3rd council agenda regarding opening a new line of credit.

Mr. Ramey told council city administration has been working on updating city trail maps. He distributed the new trail maps, which are printed on waterproof paper to council members.

Mr. Ramey reminded council that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) Grant is scheduled for bid opening Thursday, February 20th and the Project Intersection Highwall Removal Project is scheduled for bid opening Tuesday, March 10th.

Mr. Ramey told council he provided members with copies of the latest monthly financials and Retail Sales Tax Report.

Mr. Ramey invited council to attend and told members he will not be able to attend the ribbon cutting at noon on Wednesday, February 19th, for Luttrell Staffing Group that recently located in one of the offices behind Wolfe, Williams, Rutherford and Reynolds law office.

Mr. Ramey said weather permitting, a ribbon cutting event for the newly renovated tennis courts at the 11th Street Park is scheduled for Monday, February 24th.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said he recently had two conversations with citizens who boasted about how impressive Flag Rock Recreation Area, the camp sites, and trails look. He said they told him they have not camped in Flag Rock, but they plan to do so this year.

Councilman Fultz stated he spoke with a person who is in a unique position in the community that enables him/her to recognize that downtown business traffic is heavier today than it has been in the past eight years he/she has been in their position. He said this person told him some unique stories and that people he knows are wanting to relocate to Norton. Councilman Fultz this individual told him the city should take out a billboard ad on Interstate 95 that reads, "Our Drive is Better than Yours," and include photos of open roads and less traffic.

Councilman Fultz shared that seven out of eight of the current year Sales Tax Reports show an increase over last year. He said it appears the city has the opportunity to surpass the most recent best fiscal year of 2015-2016, and the city could potentially get closer to the 2012-2013 fiscal year numbers, if the current trends continue. Councilman Fultz said the increased sales taxes collected in the city represents an increase in sales in the City of Norton of almost eight million dollars. He said this translates into approximately one million dollars per month into the city's businesses which is above last year. Councilman Fultz noted that this economic growth is significant.

Councilman Caruso stated he has been on council for almost 12 years and this is the first year the city has had more than three consecutive months of increased sales tax revenue. He said he is extremely pleased with the Sales Tax Reports.

Councilman Caruso said he would like to see the workshop schedule as soon as possible.

Mr. Ramey said they are working on the schedule and he anticipates to have dates for council at the March 3rd meeting.

Councilman Caruso also asked for just a project workshop for council to be placed on the schedule before the first official meeting.

Councilman Caruso stated a citizen approached him about the Ridge Avenue stacked stone wall and reminded him that the city has been working on this project for over three years, and he wanted to know if the city had received any updated measurements.

Mr. Ramey said the wall had been measured recently, but he did not have the measurement. He said he would get the measurement and provide council with a report on the wall.

Councilman Caruso said he noticed as he entered Council Chambers that the canon needs painted.

Mr. Ramey said the canon needs to be removed and restored and city administration has discussed this repair.

Councilman Caruso said if the canon is not restored, then it needs to be painted.

Councilman Caruso stated before the meeting members talked briefly about cabins on High Knob. He said he would like to talk in detail at one of council's workshops about appropriating additional funds for this project. Councilman Caruso said he has specific details about the project he would like to discuss with council members. He told council that Dan Swanson had approached him about assisting the city with this project and he wanted council to be aware that Mr. Swanson had talked with him about this subject.

Councilman Caruso told members at the same workshop council may want to discuss replacing the bridge that leads out onto Flag Rock. He said there are people who are willing to make significant contributions to replace the bridge.

Councilman Caruso said he would like for the city to move forward on obtaining information or acquiring the old St. Mary's property.

Councilman Caruso said the trash along Trent Street, especially in the curve at the Valero gas station needs to be addressed.

Police Chief James Lane said the judge now assigns fine workers. He said the police department currently has three individuals performing community service and he would have them remove litter in that area.

Councilman Caruso said the city needs to revisit purchasing the "\$500 Fine for Littering" signs and install them in key locations.

Mayor Fawbush said he, Mr. Ramey, and Councilman Fultz traveled to Richmond last week for the governor's Local Government Exchange Program. He said the city and Wise County were paired with the City of Alexandria. He said the purpose of the exchange program is for local government to experience cultural exchange.

Mr. Ramey then asked the students from UVA-Wise, who are from the area of Alexandria, to help Norton plan the tour of the city for the officials from the City of Alexandria. He asked the students to email their thoughts to him about what they are impressed with in Norton and what they think the city should showcase.

Mayor Fawbush said he thinks the exchange will be interesting.

Mayor Fawbush said the Legislative Reception in Richmond went well and it had record attendance from Southwest Virginia.

Mayor Fawbush said he is looking forward to working on the budget.

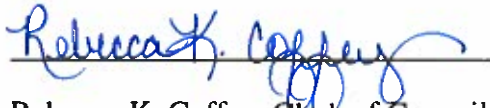
There being no further business to come before council, Mayor Fawbush declared the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council