

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, September 15, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Council Members Present: William Mays, Robert Fultz, Jr., Joseph Fawbush, Mark Caruso, and Delores Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, and Jeffery L. Shupe, Finance Director

The invocation was given by Councilman Robert Fultz, Jr..

Prior to the Pledge of Allegiance, Mr. Ramey told council that Friday, September 11th was the 19th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. He said that the city partnered with the Virginia National Guard who teamed up with the AmeriCorps National Civilian Conservation Corps Southern Region Team River 5 (AmeriCorps/NCCC Team River 5), the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at the University of Virginia's College at Wise and at East Tennessee State University to replace the weathered United States flag on Flag Rock. Mr. Ramey shared photos of the ceremony and then the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Norton City Trail Coordinator Shayne Fields.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Belcher, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN - Caruso, council moved to adopt the minutes of the September 1, 2020, meeting as presented.

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

Council had been presented with a request for a Revocable Special Use Permit to allow the placement of tables and chairs on city property K & E Southern Sweets, L.L.C., located at 648 Park Avenue, N.W.

Mr. Ramey told council that a ribbon cutting ceremony for K & E Southern Sweets, L.L.C., was held on September 1st and owners Kelly and Elizabeth Adkins were in attendance to request council's authorization to place some tables and seating on the sidewalk on Park Avenue and on 7th Street in front of their business.

Kelly Adkins spoke briefly to council about their business and said that the tables and chairs would be moved inside the building each evening.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to authorize the city manager to prepare a Revocable Special Use Permit to allow tables and chairs on the sidewalk at 648 Park Avenue, N.W.

The next agenda item was the introduction of the 2020 AmeriCorps/National Civilian Conservation Corps Southern Region Team River 5 (AmeriCorps/NCCC Team River 5).

Norton City Trail Coordinator Shayne Fields introduced the team and informed council this year's team will assist with trail development in the Flag Rock Recreation Area. He said the team would be working on the Lower Campground Trail and the Big Foot Trail. Mr. Fields then asked Team Leader Sarah Cross to speak with council about the team.

Ms. Cross gave council a brief history about AmeriCorps NCCC and showed a video of the team's StreamSweepers work removing trash from the Clinch River and other streams in the area using canoes. She said the team collected over 10,000 pounds of trash and that flooding had contributed to some of the littering. Ms. Cross said council the area is gorgeous and the people are amazing. She asked each team member to introduce themselves and note where they are from: Ta'Nia Childers (Delaware); Sarah Cross (Missouri); Jake Commers (Arizona); Austin Reese (Minnesota); Alex Tudela (Northern Mariana Islands); Amelie Cook (California); Jasmine Vedula (Michigan); Sara Ramirez (California); Sam Mason (Washington); Draven Pfahler (Oregon).

Mayor Fawbush welcomed the team to the city and thanked them for making a difference in our community by helping to build the city's ecotourism economy.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, the city manager provided an update on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

Mr. Ramey said the city has received two payments from the Commonwealth for CARES Act funding along with strict guidelines for expending the funds. He said the city has committed \$215,000 of the CARES Act funds with a good portion of the expenditures being paid out to the listed partner organizations: Family Crisis Support Services - \$35,000; Norton Rescue Squad - \$25,000; Norton City Schools - \$25,000; and the Wise County/City of Norton Food Bank - \$15,000. The city manager told council that CARES Act funding totaling \$65,000 has been committed to building and bathroom modifications at the Community Center and funding totaling \$25,000 is committed for the installation of WIFI Hotspots for Norton students at various city parks throughout the city. He said city administration is exploring additional assistance to Norton Rescue Squad by possibly purchasing another ambulance equipped with a special airflow filtration system and other enhancements to handle infectious disease cases. The city manager told council that Wise County approached the city to purchase an ambulance at a split cost of 60/40. He said the total cost of the ambulance is \$300,000 and that Wise County would pay \$180,000 and the city would pay \$120,000 which would come out of the CARES Act funds. He said Wise County is purchasing a total of six ambulances and entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each town rescue squad and the City of Norton for Norton Rescue Squad. The city manager stated that the next large expenditure of funding would be to use the remaining CARES Act funding for business assistance and that the city may customize a program that fits our community. He informed council that the city will continue to see disinfectant costs and that city administration is looking into upgrading the phone system to allow employees to work remotely. The city manager asked council if they approved of the potential purchase of a new ambulance under the parameters stated above. It was the consensus of council to proceed with the MOU and the purchase of a new ambulance as outlined above.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a check to BB&T Governmental Finance Payment Processing, dated July 10, 2020, in the amount of \$121,312.41 for a bond payment for 11th Street, S.W., bridge repairs.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the check to BB&T Governmental Finance Payment Processing, as stated above.

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

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said the contractor for Project Intersection received approval from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for its Traffic Control Plan related to blasting and earth removal. He said blasting will last for four to six weeks, Monday through Friday. Mr. Ramey then distributed a press release city administration will share with local newspapers on how blasting and traffic will proceed once mountain removal has started.

Councilman Caruso asked about concerns for foundations.

Mr. Ramey said the contractor has surveyed hundreds of structures and approached every property owner and offered to do an external and internal survey. He said the contractor is required to install survey stations that will be monitored by the state fire marshal's office and that VDOT has also requested to review the monitoring information.

Mr. Ramey said he would like a consensus from council to advertise a public hearing for the Proposed Southside Comprehensive Housing Project that was previously submitted as a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Project application. He said the city did not receive funding but the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development is providing a second round of funding and for the city to reapply a second public hearing must be held.

It was the consensus of council to authorize the city manager to advertise a second public hearing for the Proposed Southside Comprehensive Housing Project at the October 6th meeting.

Mr. Ramey said he would like to schedule a council workshop so he can provide a detailed update on several projects.

It was the consensus of council to meet on Saturday, October 3rd with Mr. Ramey to work out the timeframe details and inform council of the meeting time later.

Mr. Ramey said Norton Parks and Recreation is promoting a downtown environmental art project to create artwork around storm drains to encourage awareness about the importance of keeping our rivers and streams clean. He said three locations downtown have been chosen and artists must submit a sketch of their proposed artwork to be approved.

Mr. Ramey said he has been asked for the city's plans for Halloween 2020.

After a brief discussion, council did not make a final determination on Halloween 2020.

Mr. Ramey said due to health concerns, the Virginia Municipal League (VML) Conference will be held virtually this year. If anyone wishes to participate, please let him know and he will register you for the event.

Mr. Ramey distributed a new buff to council members that read "Norton Strong."

Mr. Ramey said for council's review he placed the latest High Knob traffic counts at each member's desk, and he distributed the latest Retail Sales Tax Report.

Mr. Ramey said the following events are scheduled: Mountain Fork Half Marathon, September 20th; High Knob Hellbender, October 3rd; and the Cloudsplitter Ultra 100 Trail Race, October 17th and 18th.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz said 29 days of school have been completed and he is thrilled that Norton School Board and school administration had the foresight to take this charge. He said seeing the students attending school in person is good. It is good for our kids to be back in school.

Councilman Fultz stated downtown looks great and it is really neat to see all the work and progress come to fruition. He noted you can see a connection between the work downtown and businesses.

Councilman Fultz shared with members 37 years ago he survived a coal mining accident and that he shares his story with his students each year hoping to encourage and help them as they work through school and issues in their lives. He said he is very grateful for each day.

Councilman Mays said he is thankful Councilman Fultz survived the accident and that he has been a blessing to council.

Councilman Caruso said Norton City Schools is a unique and special place to be going back to school and to do what they are doing. He said it is critically important to have kids in the classroom. Technology cannot replace in-person teaching.

Councilman Caruso said the news article in the Kingsport Times News was a great article and an annual changing of the flag each September 11th to commemorate the September 11, 2001, terror attacks would be good for our kids to learn and understand.

On a personal note, Councilman Caruso told members scammers had obtained his personal information and involved him in their online scam promoting that he specialized in breeding Golden Retrievers. He said once someone purchased a Golden Retriever through the scammers online site they were told they would receive their dog from Mark Caruso. Councilman Caruso said the Norton Police Department has tracked a great deal of information down on the online scammers and have done a fine job. He said there are also two other individuals in Norton who have been included in these scamming schemes and he just wants people to be aware and to keep an eye on their personal information.

Mayor Fawbush said the generation before him could tell you where they were when President John F. Kennedy was shot. He said I could tell you where I was when the 9/11 terror attacks happened.

Mayor Fawbush said council has already discussed Halloween 2020 but he thinks it needs to be placed on council's October 3rd agenda for discussion. He asked members to be thinking about it.

Mayor Fawbush said Marty Hagy wants council to start thinking about the Christmas parade. He said Mr. Hagy said that area bands, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Boy and Girl Scouts, and gymnasts will not be participating in the parade. Mayor Fawbush said Mr. Hagy is concerned that if one town has a Christmas parade and another town decides not to have a parade that churches will not invest in a float for one town.

Councilman Fultz suggested that these groups be called to see if their intent for parade participation is to participate or not participate.

Council agreed with Councilman Fultz and asked that Parks and Recreation Director Shelly Knox contact these groups to discuss their decisions.

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