

The regular meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, December 17, 2002 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers with Mayor Robert Raines presiding.

Present: Joseph Hunnicutt, Jack Wallace, Robert Raines, William Mays, and Joseph Fawbush

Also Present: E. W. Ward, City Manager and Bill Bradshaw, City Attorney

The invocation was given by the City Manager and was followed by the pledge of allegiance led by the Director of Social Services, Bill Stokes.

Upon a motion by William Mays, seconded by Joseph Hunnicutt, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the minutes of December 3, 2002 meeting as presented.

20340

At this time, Mayor Raines amended the agenda to cancel Item 6-E – Closed Meeting.

20341

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

20342

Council had been presented with a copy of the proposed 2003-2004 C-N-W Sewer Authority Budget and Rate Structure. Mr. Ward advised that Mr. Mark Hollyfield, Executive Director of the Authority, was present tonight as well as Council's two representatives on this Authority, Mr. Jack Wallace and Mr. Joseph Hunnicutt.

Mr. Ward advised Council that they had in their packets a notice stating that the public hearing on this rate structure and budget will be held on Wednesday, January 22, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. He advised that he had reviewed this budget and the audit, which was presented at the last Council meeting, and has met with Mr. Hollyfield twice, and a lot of his questions regarding the budget were answered. The rate structure shows a rate increase for the City in the amount of \$39,866 and our total contribution or user rate for the year will be \$793,965.00 as proposed.

20343

The City Manager briefly went over the items contained in a letter he had sent to Mr. Hollyfield as a response to the proposed budget and monthly user charges and advised Council that he will be glad to answer any questions they may have.

Mayor Raines stated that he felt that the Authority and Mr. Hollyfield will answer the questions presented to them in Mr. Ward's letter and advised that the City is sensitive to any increase due to financial woes coming this year because of the financial crisis in the Commonwealth. He stated that this will be a tough budget year.

Following a brief discussion, Mayor Raines thanked Mr. Ward for providing this information to Council. He further advised Mr. Hollyfield that Council appreciates the job he and his employees are doing.

Mr. Ward discussed briefly with Council the upcoming General Assembly Session and the Governor's proposed budget reduction measures to be announced on December 20th. In Council's packets, he had included a copy of the Virginia Municipal League Legislative Program, which details the local government position and the priority of a

variety of legislative issues. Also discussed is the state budget crisis, wherein state aid to local governments will be scrutinized.

Mr. Ward advised that the City has already been advised that the state reimbursement for the General Registrar's Office has been cut by \$4,029 for the fiscal year 2003 and that the State has advised that the City will be responsible for picking up that amount.

The City Manager also discussed ways that some local governments are attempting to demonstrate to the State that the idea that local governments can pick up the slack is not acceptable. He stated that he felt that the City needs to look at some method of communicating with our legislators regarding this issue and asked Council for guidance.

Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of Council that the Mayor and City Manager work together to get a letter to our local officials on the impact this budget crisis is having on local governments.

Council had in their packets a copy of a Brownfield Grant Application for the City of Norton. Mr. Ward advised that this grant application has been submitted by the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy in the amount of \$200,000 and has been titled the Norton Area Brownfields Project. Mine scarred lands can be considered as brownfield sites. This grant would cover planning, inventory, and assessment of brownfields in the middle section of the Guest River watershed and could run up to two years. This project covers areas that are mine scarred, have acid mine drainage, high walls, hazardous equipment and facilities, and eroding mine lands.

A map was shown to Council designating the various sites that would be considered if this grant application is funded. Mr. Ward advised that DMME is very optimistic on this being funded and that the City has sent a letter over the Mayor's signature supporting this project, as did the Norton Industrial Development Authority.

Mayor Raines advised Mr. Ward that this was a good project and to keep pursuing it.

Council had been presented in their packets a Resolution Adopted by the Governing Body of the City of Norton, Virginia Authorizing the Execution of a Reciprocal Agreement Providing Mutual Aid Through the Furnishing of Police and Other Employees and Agents Together with all Necessary Equipment in the Event of Need or Emergency.

Mr. Ward advised that some issues have been raised on this agreement and that the Chief of Police and City Attorney have been working on this document. This agreement is between the City, Wise County, the towns of Big Stone Gap, Appalachia, Coeburn, St. Paul, Wise, Pound, the University of Virginia's College at Wise, and Mountain Empire Community College and has been adopted for the past 15 years. The current agreement expires on December 31st of this year.

Police Chief Mongle spoke briefly to Council and asked their support for the adoption of this resolution.

The City Attorney advised that he had been advised by Mountain Empire Community College that the State Attorney General's Office has some problems with some of the language in this agreement and will not authorize MECC's execution of this agreement in this form. He further stated that the Town of Big Stone Gap hasn't authorized execution of this agreement.

Following a discussion on this agreement, it was the consensus of Council to table this item until the other jurisdictions, their attorneys, and the Attorney General's Office approve the language of this document.

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

City offices will be closed on December 24th and 25th in observance of the Christmas holiday and January 1st for New Year's Day.

Council's next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2003. An organizational meeting will be held at 7:00 prior to our regular meeting.

20347

On behalf of the City Administration and employees, he would like to extend holiday wishes to the members of Council.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA


B. Robert Raines, Mayor.

ATTEST:


Clerk