

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, March 16, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Present: Joseph Fawbush, Robert Fultz, Jr., William Mays, Sarah Davis, and Mark Caruso

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

The invocation was given by Councilman Robert Fultz and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Davis, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of March 2, 2021, as presented.

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

In their packets, council received a request from the John I. Burton High School Class of 1971 to use a portion of 7th Street, N.W., on Saturday, July 17, 2021, for a street dance as part of the 50th Class Reunion.

Mr. Ramey presented a PowerPoint presentation showing the proposed area of 7th Street, N.W., from Park Avenue to Federal Street that the class would like to block for the event. He said he has spoken with Mark Wooten, 1971 Class President, and that Mr. Wooten was in attendance to speak with council regarding this request.

Mr. Wooten told council that he has received many inquiries from classmates regarding the reunion and he expects approximately 70 guests to attend. He said former students will tour John I. Burton High School at 2:00 p.m., with dinner following at Sugar Hill Cidery. Mr. Wooten stated that the street dance will be from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., and that no alcohol will be served. He said his band The Fatty Livers will play for the dance and that everyone is welcome. Mr. Wooten requested the use of the city's Expo Center for the street dance in case of inclement weather and asked for use of city tables and chairs to accommodate 70 guests, if available. He said the class will pay for rental of the tables and chairs.

Mr. Ramey noted that he will work with Mr. Wooten on finalizing the event details.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to approve the John I. Burton High School Class of 1971 request to block off a portion of 7th Street, N.W., for a street dance on Saturday, July 17, 2021, with the Expo Center serving as a contingency location for the street dance in the event of inclement weather.

The city manager presented an update from Davenport & Company, Inc., for the potential refinancing of portions of the General Operating Fund debt and of the Enterprise Fund debt.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, the city manager informed council that city financial planner Davenport & Company, Inc., recommends the city pursue a dual track approach to refinance a combined amount up to \$3.6 million in debt of the General Operating Fund and Enterprise Fund. Track One is the acceptance of the proposal from Powell Valley National Bank in the amount of \$2.8 million to refund Enterprise Fund debt at an interest rate of 2.7 percent. The bond refunding would be guaranteed by a pledge of utility revenues and General Fund obligation. Refinancing the debt would free up cashflows by approximately \$50,000 over the next nine years and reduce

the total number of payments and maturity of the loan by 9 years. The city manager stated that Track Two recommends that the city accept the proposal from Powell Valley National Bank to refund \$800,000 in debt from the General Operating Fund. He said discussions with the bank are ongoing and the interest rate would be fixed for the term of the loan. The city manager said the maturity date for the General Fund debt would not change but the city would save \$15,000. He said if council would like to move forward with the debt refunding city administration would advise Powell Valley National Bank and that Davenport & Company, Inc., would begin working with bond counsel to complete the refinancing by the end of March. The city manager told council the city attorney has reviewed the two refunding resolutions and approved the documents as presented.

Council was presented A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance up to \$1,500,000 Principal Amount of a General Obligation Water and Sewer Revenue Refunding Bond, Series 2021A and up to \$1,500,000 Principal Amount of a General Obligation Water and Sewer Revenue Refunding Bond, Series 2021B (Taxable), of the City of Norton, Virginia, and Providing for the Form, Details, and Payment Thereof.

Mr. Ramey said counsel will make any necessary changes to the form of the resolution and the amounts of the refunding bonds will not increase.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance up to \$1,500,000 Principal Amount of a General Obligation Water and Sewer Revenue Refunding Bond, Series 2021A and up to \$1,500,000 Principal Amount of a General Obligation Water and Sewer Revenue Refunding Bond, Series 2021B (Taxable), of the City of Norton, Virginia, and Providing for the Form, Details, and Payment Thereof. (Insert)

Included in council packets was A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of up to \$800,000 Principal Amount of a General Obligation Refunding Bond, Series 2021C, of the City of Norton, Virginia, and Providing for the Form, Details, and Payment Thereof.

There were no comments or questions from council.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Davis, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – none, ABSENT – none, council moved to adopt A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of up to \$800,000 Principal Amount of a General Obligation Refunding Bond, Series 2021C, of the City of Norton, Virginia, and Providing for the Form, Details, and Payment Thereof. (Insert)

Presented in council packets for consideration was A Loan Resolution of the Governing Body of the City of Norton Authorizing a United States of America, United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA-RD) Loan/Grant to purchase two police vehicles.

Mr. Ramey said the city has been approved for a \$50,000 grant that includes a \$55,000 loan from USDA-RD to purchase two police vehicles. He said council must adopt the loan resolution since there is a loan component to the grant.

After a brief discussion regarding the police department's vehicle fleet and the intended use of the two new police vehicles, Councilman Caruso made a motion to adopt the Loan Resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilman Fultz, and the motion was passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Davis, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN - Mays, council moved to adopt A Loan Resolution of the Governing Body of the City of Norton Authorizing a United States of America, United States Department of

Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA-RD) Loan/Grant to purchase two police vehicles.
(Insert)

Council was presented a Resolution for Compliance related to the Southside Comprehensive Community Development Project as required by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD).

Mr. Ramey said the city applied a second time to VDHCD for a community development project in the Southside area and was awarded a \$1.5 million grant. He told council that city administration is working to get under contract with VDHCD and as part of the program council has a checklist the city must address before moving forward. Mr. Ramey stated that the grant award will provide: the rehabilitation of 12 houses; substantial reconstruction of two houses; demolition of eight structures; removal of junk; debris; weeds; and inoperable vehicles; resident cleanup sessions; improvement of water services; and upgrade sidewalks and streets. He said the grant requires adoption of the following resolutions to meet VDHCD grant guidelines: Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan; Local Business and Employment Plan; Non-Discrimination Policy; Grievance Procedure; Fair Housing Certification; and Resolution to Appropriate Funds. Mr. Ramey noted that Councilwoman Davis found an error in VDHCD's Non-Discrimination Policy and that the state has corrected the error and issued a new document. Mr. Ramey provided council members with a copy of the corrected document.

After review and discussion of the documents and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Davis, Caruso, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the Resolution for Compliance as Required by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Regarding the Southside Comprehensive Community Development Project CIG #20-20-41. (Insert)

Mr. Ramey presented his bi-weekly update on COVID-19 cases and funding on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funding.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Ramey stated that the city had an increase of five COVID-19 cases and he noted that the number of cases in the city are leveling. He reported that Wise County had an increase of 56 new cases since the last council meeting, and he then shared the total number of vaccinations on the local, state, and national levels.

Mr. Ramey reported no changes in the CARES Act funding, but noted the new stimulus bill has passed the House and Senate and that the city is expected to receive funding. He said it is anticipated the city will receive two payments with the first payment to be received within the next 60 days, and the second payment within the next 12 months. Mr. Ramey said the city has not received official notification, but it is indicated that the city may receive \$722,000. He said city administration wants to maximize the second round of funding to benefit the community as a whole, and he told council that the school system will receive its own funding with the second stimulus bill.

Mr. Ramey said the city has requested a drawdown totaling \$56,425.78 for round four of the LENOWISCO Small Business Recovery Assistance Program and that round five has closed and is being reviewed.

Mr. Ramey advised council that the city will move to round three of the Municipal Utility Relief Program and that city administration expects more utility customers will receive aid due to a softening of qualification guidelines making more people eligible to receive funding.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Ramey said city administration will probably continue quarterly reporting on CARES Act funding until 2024.

Next an update on the 2021 Norton Business Challenge was presented by the city manager.

Mr. Ramey told council that five applications have been received for this year's challenge and the classes are currently being scheduled. He said applicants will be judged and up to \$60,000 can be awarded.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a check to Wise County Board of Supervisors, dated December 18, 2020, in the amount of \$121,462 for the city's share of the new ambulance.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Davis, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT - None, council moved to confirm the check to Wise County Board of Supervisors, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Davis, Caruso, and 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 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 Caruso, seconded by Councilman Mays, 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 Southwest Virginia Regional Jail Authority for a four-year term to expire April 3, 2025.

Councilwoman Davis nominated Fred L. Ramey, Jr., to be reappointed to the Southwest Virginia Regional Jail Authority for a four-year term to expire April 3, 2025.

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

Mayor Fawbush declared Fred L. Ramey, Jr., to be reappointed to the Southwest Virginia Regional Jail Authority for a four-year term to expire April 3, 2025.

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey told council there is a proposal to increase the size of the OPIOD Abatement Authority from 11 to 15 members with the new members being drawn from the constituent group which is already part of the proposed membership. He said the city's legal team believes this will dilute the role of localities and they are recommending the city be added to a draft letter as

being opposed to this proposed change. Mr. Ramey said if it is the consensus of council to oppose the increase in membership, he would inform the city attorney.

Council consensus was to oppose the proposed increase in board membership and the mayor asked the city manager to inform the city attorney of council's decision of opposition.

The city manager asked council to check their calendars in April for a possible date for a budget and capital meeting.

It was the consensus of council to schedule a budget and capital meeting Saturday, April 3, 2021.

Mr. Ramey said the city is hosting its first cross-country event at the Flag Rock Recreation Area. He said to commemorate the event the city will provide each of the participants with a t-shirt promoting the city's trail system.

The city manager provided council copies of the latest Retail Sales Tax Report.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilwoman Davis thanked members for allowing her the opportunity to join council and to fill Delores Belcher's seat until the special election in November. She said before joining council she did not realize all the projects and work the city was performing, but she is thankful for all council has been doing.

Councilman Fultz welcomed Councilwoman Davis to council and said he is looking forward to working with her on council.

Councilman Mays welcomed Councilwoman Davis to council and stated that she will do a great job for the City of Norton.

Councilman Caruso agreed with Councilman Fultz's and Councilman May's comments.

Mayor Fawbush thanked Councilwoman Davis for accepting the position on council.

He said the City of Norton is a great place to live, work, and send your children to school. Mayor Fawbush noted that the city has been a leader in Southwest Virginia for taking the initiative on various projects, and he thanked city administration for the work they perform daily. He said it takes a great deal to run a city, and we can be proud of our community.

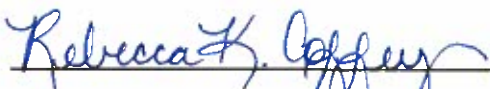
There being no further business to come before council, Mayor Fawbush declared the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:


Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council