

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, April 5, 2022, 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 Sarah Davis

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager and Interim City Clerk

The invocation was given by Rev. Freddie Powers, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Norton Police Department First Sergeant Greg Mays.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Davis, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the March 15, 2022, council meeting as presented.

Prior to the Mayor's Call of Visitors, Mayor Fawbush welcomed Forward Wise County Leadership Development Program participants to the council meeting.

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

The city manager provided council with a brief background concerning the next request and said Sports Car Club of America Rally & Solo & Experimental Programs Senior Director Heyward Wagner was in attendance to request council authorization for the car club to conduct a hill climb event August 27 and 28, 2022, along Route 619 in the City of Norton.

Mr. Ramey said Mr. Wagner contacted him in January 2022 about conducting a hill climb event in Norton, with the Blue Ridge Region of the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) hosting the event. The proposed two-day event would consist of drivers competing against the clock, starting at the bridge crossing Robinette Branch and traveling 1.6 miles with an elevation change of 1,600 feet to the straight away prior to the Upper Reservoir curve. He said city administration had participated in multiple virtual meetings to review the event concept and determine if the event is something that could be done in Norton. Noting the uniqueness and complexity of the proposed event, the city manager said city administration thought it would be beneficial to request input from other agencies such as the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) as well as the city's insurance carrier. The city manager explained that he thought tonight's meeting was an appropriate time for the Sports Car Club of America senior director to discuss the hill climb event proposal and address questions from council.

At this time, Mr. Ramey introduced Mr. Wagner and asked him to introduce his team members and discuss the proposed Norton hill climb event.

Mr. Wagner introduced Rob Leslie, regional executive for the Blue Ridge Region of the Sports Car Club of America, and Blue Ridge Region SCCA member Jim Mason and provided a visual presentation about the history of the 78-year-old national sports car club of approximately 50,000 members and the sport of hill climbing. He discussed the Appalachian Hill Climb Series (a series being organized by a conglomeration of three SCCA regions) and associated partners Backroads of Appalachia, Summit Racing and Grassroots Motorsports and also showed a video about a hill climb event held in Pineville, Kentucky.

The senior director explained that the key elements of the hill climb event are the road, community support, available parking, insurance, mountain control, and emergency response. He asked council for permission for the SCCA and the Blue Ridge Region of the SCCA to

proceed with marketing and development of the August 27 and 28 hill climb event along Route 619 in Norton. He said the mission of the event is to bring everyone together and promote excitement and engagement in the fun of motor sports.

Mr. Leslie spoke briefly about the Blue Ridge Region of SCCA and the Appalachian Hill Climb Series. He noted that Route 619 is a perfect road for hill climbing and he is excited to bring the event to Norton.

Mr. Leslie and Mr. Wagner asked if council had any questions.

Mr. Wagner answered questions from council concerning event planning and logistics.

The city manager advised one of the next steps would be a workshop for city administration and SCCA representatives to visit some of the event sites to determine best options for planning the event.

Chris Sturgill from Coeburn, Virginia, and a member of Backroads of Appalachia, spoke about community preparation for the influx of people coming to the event and the role that Backroads of Appalachia plays.

Mr. Sturgill said Backroads of Appalachia has scheduled a Mini Cooper event April 16 in Norton. He explained that a group of Mini Cooper owners from all over the Southeastern United States would drive their Mini Coopers to Norton to eat at the Woodbooger restaurant and drive to High Knob.

Mr. Wagner asked for council approval for SCCA to proceed with plans for promoting and planning a hill climb for August 27 and 28 along Route 619 in Norton. He advised that the next steps are VDOT permit approval and establishment of an emergency management plan for the event. He said a name for the event has not yet been determined, but the SCCA is asking for city input in determining a name for the event.

The consensus of council was to authorize the Sports Car Club of America to proceed with further planning of the event.

Council members thanked Mr. Wagner, Mr. Leslie, and Mr. Sturgill for their presentation about the proposed hill climb event and for answering their questions.

Authorization to refund erroneously assessed personal property taxes was also on the agenda. Mr. Ramey said Norton Commissioner of Revenue Judy Miller determined that 2021 personal property taxes for Norton Community Physician Services Pulmonology were erroneously assessed because the business closed in 2020, so a refund in the amount of \$59.20 is due to the business. The Commissioner of Revenue also determined that a refund is due to Norton Community Physician Services Oncology for erroneously assessed 2021 personal property taxes in the amount of \$41 because the business closed in 2020.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following unanimous vote, YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Davis, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, ABSTAIN – None, council authorized refunds to Norton Community Physician Services Pulmonology for erroneously assessed 2021 personal property taxes in the amount of \$59.20 and to Norton Community Physician Services Oncology for erroneously assessed 2021 personal property taxes in the amount of \$41.

Mr. Ramey requested council consideration of a Resolution Authorizing Signature Authority for Virginia Department of Transportation Grant Applications, Agreements, and Funding of Local Share of Costs as May be Applicable.

Upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Davis, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt a Resolution Authorizing Signature Authority for Virginia

Department of Transportation Grant Applications, Agreements, and Finding of Local Share of Costs as May be Applicable. (Insert)

A Resolution Proclaiming the Week of April 10-16, 2022, as Local Public Safety – 911 Telecommunicators Week in the City of Norton was presented for adoption.

The city manager said each year the city recognizes dispatchers for their service. This resolution honors and recognizes city public safety telecommunications personnel and the vital contributions they make to the safety of the citizens of Norton. Mr. Ramey advised that City of Norton E-911 Center dispatchers answered 6,114 emergency 911 calls and 31,203 non-emergency calls in 2021.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Davis, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt a Resolution Proclaiming the Week of April 10-16, 2022, as Local Public Safety – 911 Telecommunicators Week in the City of Norton. (Insert)

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Mays, Fultz, Caruso, Davis, Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to go into closed meeting to discuss 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 Councilwoman Davis, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to go back into open meeting.

Mayor Fawbush declared council back in open meeting.

Mr. Ramey polled each member of council as to the Certification of Closed Meeting with each answering yes. The city manager then read A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, 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 told council that bids for the Southside Waterline Replacement Project were opened Tuesday, March 29, and the city received four bids ranging from \$444,520 to \$1,105,990. He advised that the low bid was close to the engineer's estimate and was from Little B Enterprises, Inc., in Castlewood, VA. He said the city has previously worked with this contractor and he anticipated the bid will be awarded soon.

The city manager said city 2022 Real Estate Tax Tickets (First Half) were being mailed this week.

Mr. Ramey said the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, now known as Virginia Energy, is hosting an Arbor Day event as part of Project Intersection from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursday, April 28, and council members were invited to attend. He said there would be a short welcome ceremony including elected officials followed by tree planting by school-age students. The city manager asked council members to inform him if they plan to attend.

He reminded council to hold the date for 2 p.m., June 11, 2022, for the 1951 Norton Little League All-Star Commemorative Marker Unveiling Ceremony.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilwoman Davis said she was excited to hear the presentation on the proposed hill climb event in Norton and she announced that she and Becky Lagow will conduct the first Cloudsplitter Committee meeting at 6 p.m., Wednesday, April 6, 2022, in council chambers.

Councilman Mays said he was super excited about the hill climb presentation and commended Chris Sturgill of Backroads of Appalachia for his role in bringing all the entities together for the hill climb event.

Councilman Fultz noted that it has been nice to see the robust turn out of people shopping at Rural King.

He commended Mr. Sturgill for his effort in promoting the area and city administration for facilitating the possibility of conducting the race in Norton. He said it was exciting to hear the presentation and explore this possibility.

Councilman Caruso echoed council comments concerning the hill climb event, and said he agreed with Councilwoman Davis about the size of the first hill climb event needing to be large rather than small.

The mayor said he is very excited SCCA has chosen Norton as a location for a hill climb race.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:



Fred Ramey, Jr., Interim Clerk of Council