

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, October 6, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor William Mays presiding.

Present: Mark Caruso, Robert Fultz, Jr., William Mays, Joseph Fawbush and Dee Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager and Bill Bradshaw, City Attorney

The invocation was given by Reverend Roger Sloce and was followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the September 15, 2015 meeting as presented.

25653

During the Mayor's call for visitors, Mr. Charles Slemple, candidate for Commonwealth Attorney for Wise County and the City of Norton spoke briefly and thanked Council for their service to the City of Norton. He stated he hopes to be able to work with the City in the future to make the court system work better and in the City of Norton.

Mr. Chris Jones, owner of Vic's Decorating came forward and advised Council he had several items to discuss. First, he had his first meeting with the Heart of Appalachia Tourism (HOA) Authority and it was unique to see what is going on throughout the region. He advised Council the Woodbooger was the most popular exhibit at the Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo held at Heartwood. Also Heart of Appalachia advised bicycling has surpassed golf as the most popular outdoor activity and they think City of Norton could become the cycling hub for Southwest Virginia.

25654

Secondly, he attended last month's council meeting to discuss the economy downtown. At that meeting, Council encouraged anyone who had ideas for economic development to share their ideas with Council. Chris advised as a result, a committee was formed which consists of 35 individuals. This group has evolved into an Internet "Think Tank" and is comprised of two City Councilman, City Manager, business leaders, and community members. This group initially met in Council Chambers and came up with ideas to share with City Council and he was here tonight to give Council their suggestions. He presented Council the group's ideas and stated the group wants to know if the City has a program to help current business owners, a program to promote downtown businesses, and a program to help individuals who are interested in opening a business downtown. The group also wanted to know if the City could develop an incentive program to entice people downtown. After sharing the rest of the group's ideas Mr. Jones asked if Council had any questions.

Mayor Mays thanked Chris and closed the audience for visitors.

In their packets, Council had been furnished information on proposed amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Ramey advised Mr. Collins, City Building Official, was present tonight to share updates with Council if needed.

Mayor Mays asked Council if they had any questions.

Mr. Bradshaw advised Council most of the changes were procedural and designed to bring the City's Zoning Ordinance into compliance with state law. He also stated Mr. Collins had done a fantastic job updating this section of City Code.

After a brief discussion, and upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to refer the Proposed Zoning Amendments to the Planning Commission with the recommendation to include the City's Lost Creek property into R-CR zone.

Included in Council's packets was a Proposed Utility Vehicle Ordinance. Mr. Ramey advised Mr. Larry Carter had provided him with the data on his utility vehicle and he had forwarded the information to Mr. Bradshaw for further research.

Mr. Bradshaw advised Council after receiving the information and doing further research he was able to eliminate the horsepower limitation, provide for more utility vehicle crossings by allowing use of intersections on roads with a traffic signal and a speed limit of 35 mph or less, and the larger insurance requirement Mr. Caruso was concerned about has been changed to reflect that operators carry at least the state minimum requirement. In addition, Council needs to consider Section 13-82. The current draft indicates violations to this ordinance shall be punishable by a civil penalty not to exceed \$100.00. Council must also designate on which streets utility vehicles can be operated.

After a lengthy discussion, Mayor Mays asked the City Manager if he could provide Council with a list of approved streets.

Mr. Ramey advised he would try to have the list of roads by the next council meeting.

In their packets, Council had a request from the Commissioner of the Revenue for a 2014 personal property tax refund that was erroneously assessed to Stephanie West in the amount of \$50.54.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council authorized a refund for erroneously assessed 2014 personal property taxes to Stephanie West in the amount of \$50.54.

Andrew Greear, Water Plant Superintendent, had provided Council with an update on the City's water reserves in their packets. As of September 30th, there was a combined reservoir capacity of 88.8 million gallons.

Mr. Ramey advised Council it is management policy to inform Council anytime reservoir capacity is below 100 million gallons. He stated historically, October is a dry month for the City. However, the City is in good shape and since this memo the reservoir is over 100 million gallons.

Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Ramey for the update on the City's water reserves.

25655

25656

25657

25658

Council was presented with a request from the City Manager for Authorization to advertise a Public Information Session to Consider VDOT MAP-21 Application for Funding of the River Walk Project.

25659

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, Council authorized the City Manager to advertise the Public Information Session to Consider VDOT MAP-21.

In their packets, Council had one check to be confirmed. The check was made payable to Thomas Construction Company in the amount of \$159,459.51.

25660

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to confirm the one check as stated above.

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

The Tourism Committee had worked with Virginia Tourism Corporation about a year-and-a-half ago on putting together a bus tour. A tour company came for a visit and put together a tour that visited the City this past weekend. The tour stayed in Norton on Friday and visited the Country Cabin, Lays Hardware and ate at Magnolia Kitchen. On Saturday they toured the Ralph Stanley Museum and Home Hardware, ate at the Wise Inn and visited Carter Fold that evening.

25661

Halloween Bash in the Park hosted by Parks & Recreation is scheduled for Saturday, October 24th.

A recent visitor to Flag Rock Recreation area from New York left a note on their fee envelope about how much they enjoyed their stay in the park and he wanted to share this message with Council.

City Offices will be closed on Monday, October 12, 2015 in observance of Columbus Day holiday.

There were no comments from the City Attorney.

25662

In comments from Council:

Councilman Caruso wanted a status update on the MOU with the Forest Service.

Mr. Ramey advised he had communicated with the new ranger and it is something he wants to get involved with but has not as of this time.

Mr. Caruso wanted an update on the Climbers Coalition.

Mr. Ramey advised he met with Brad Mathisen and Brad hopes to come to the next council meeting to give an update on activities since his last appearance at Council.

He advised the Rescue Squad Board of Directors met and significant progress has been made on reorganizing the squad to allow for a more streamlined organizational structure. He advised he felt the squad is ready to move the payroll under the City and the Captain is going to visit the City Manager to discuss the matter.

25663

He advised he would like an agenda and meeting date for Council to discuss a strategic plan or comprehensive plan review. He would like for Council to rewrite the strategic plan before Council gets into CIP and the budget process.

Councilman Fultz advised AmeriCorps is coming next week to help Shayne Fields with the mountain bike trails and next spring will be an opportunity for the City to promote these bike trails.

25664

He advised the Big Stone Gap movie is opening on Thursday of this week and the City is fortunate in that we get the actual movie.

Councilwoman Belcher had no comments.

25665

At this time, Councilman Caruso advised Mayor Mays he would like to thank Becky Coffey for the John I. Burton Hall of Fame set up to honor the inductees into the Hall of Fame. It was a great event.

25666

He would like to thank Mr. Ramey for hosting a marketing major from UVA who is interested in doing a project for the City as part of graduation requirement. Fred has spent a lot of hours on Sunday with this student and hopefully this will bring good results for the City.

Councilman Fawbush advised over 500 students gathered at the 11th Street Park for the International Walk to School Day. Delegate Kilgore and representatives from Mattern & Craig, DMME, VDOT, and Thomas Construction were in attendance. He advised this project started nine years ago and he wanted to commend Fred for getting all these entities to work together. Eight bicycles were given away to the students and the event was well attended.

25667

Everyone is invited to Flag Rock on October 16th and 17th for the Woodbooger Festival. Fliers are being distributed in the schools and he hopes everyone will meet up on the mountain to join in the activities.

Mayor Mays commended the downtown business owners and stated no one can help you like you can help yourselves.

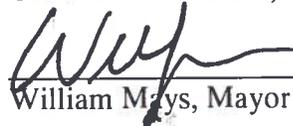
Mayor Mays addressed Chris Jones about his mentioning the City creating an incentive program for downtown businesses. He advised Chris he wanted to hear what the downtown businesses consider incentives.

25668

He advised he agreed with most of the comments made from the newly formed 35 member group except for one. He stated he is not offended by it but he respectfully disagrees.

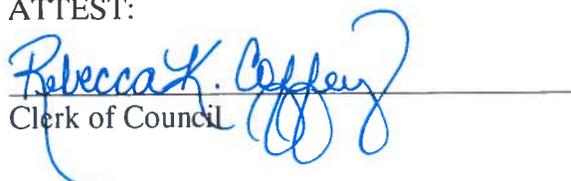
There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council