

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, October 18, 2016, 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 Gary Hill and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by First Sergeant Greg Mays.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Mays, Belcher, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the October 4, 2016, meeting as presented.

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During the Mayor's Call for Visitors, Mr. Chris Jones, Chairman of the City of Norton Tourism Committee, was present to give Council an update on the High Knob Music Festival, which was held at the High Knob Recreation Lake and on the activities of the Norton Tourism Committee. He advised that the volunteers of the High Knob Music Festival have applied for a grant to make improvements at High Knob Recreation Area, and the 2017 festival will be held in June to coincide with the Best Friend Festival and the Mountain Music Festival.

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On behalf of Tourism Committee, Mr. Jones requested the City install "no littering" signs showing the penalty imposed for littering on High Knob and the enforcement of the littering ordinance. Mr. Jones talked about other suggestions for downtown and the Committee's thoughts for the FY 2016-2017 Tourism Budget.

Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Jones and noted that the Committee gave Council a great deal of information to consider.

Dr. Scott Hamilton, President of Mountain Empire Community College, gave a brief update on the college, advising that Fall enrollment is down slightly compared to last year. The college finished the FY 2016 budget year with a small surplus, and the college is partnering with other agencies to apply for grants to offer various industry training programs. Among the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) is ranked number two in the state in workforce training due to tripling the amount of student credentials. MECC is responsible for 60 percent of the credits generated throughout the state for the On-Ramp Program, which provides training for dislocated workers and students who need to obtain their general education diploma (GED). Dr. Hamilton said Home Craft Days, held at the college this past weekend, was successful and the college is looking forward to another successful year.

Mayor Mays thanked Dr. Hamilton for his presentation and expressed Council's appreciation for his regular updates. Mayor Mays, on behalf of Council, presented Dr. Hamilton with a Community Leadership Award recognizing him for seven years of dedicated service to the area as president of the College.

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After the presentation of the plaque, applause was given to Dr. Hamilton and a group picture was taken with Council.

Mr. Ramey advised that he had asked the City Registrar Marie Muir and the Norton Electoral Board Chairman Mike Brown to attend the meeting to provide an update on the City's newly purchased electronic voting equipment.

Mr. Mike Brown, Chairman of the Norton Electoral Board, noted that the City purchased two Express Voting Machines and a DS200 Scanner and Tabulator. He said the benefit of the DS200 Scanner and Tabulator is that the equipment provides a printed ballot for voters to review before casting their vote and provides a paper trail for a vote recount, if needed. Mr. Brown advised that a video has been produced, by City staff, demonstrating how to use the new voting equipment, and the video will be shown on the City's Access Channel 51 and social media. The video was then played for Council, and Mr. Brown said the Electoral Board is expecting a large turnout of voters for the election.

26063

Mr. Ramey said it has been several years since Dr. Walter "Wally" Smith of the University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA-Wise) has updated Council on the salamander research being conducted at Flag Rock, so he invited him to explain the work being done on the project.

Dr. Smith advised that Flag Rock is a global "hot spot" for salamanders and that our area has more species of salamanders than any other location in the world. UVA-Wise is currently studying the green salamander because it is the only member of this species that lives in the Eastern United States. He said the green salamander is number two on the potentially endangered species list, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of determining if this species should be listed as threatened or endangered. He said the college has partnered with several other colleges in the scientific research of the green salamander, and their joint research has been published in three scientific journals. UVA-Wise has received \$130,000 in research funding due to the data collected at Flag Rock, and the college has been invited by the state to be the Virginia lead in a six-state effort to review the status of the species for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Mr. Ramey said he is hoping to place an educational kiosk and signage on the green salamander at Flag Rock, with information provided by Dr. Smith, and to dedicate a section on the City's webpage to the research and findings.

Following a brief discussion, Council thanked Dr. Smith for his work at Flag Rock and his presentation.

The City Manager discussed the Norton Rescue Squad (NRS) funding history, via a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Ramey advised that City Council had appropriated \$25,000 in the FY 2017 budget and that the City has transferred \$20,700 as of October 6, 2016. He said he is concerned that the squad will need additional funding to meet payroll and expenditures, so City Administration is requesting City Council consider appropriating an additional \$12,500 for FY 2017.

Councilman Caruso added that the Board has discussed updating the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City and the Norton Rescue Squad, and the Board has established new by-laws that are expected to be approved at the first meeting in November. He said the Board will be asking the City to assist in all facets of creating a new

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accounting system for the NRS which will include payroll, an annual audit, a fixed asset inventory, a new property lease, mutual aid agreements, accounts payable, and a budget. The Board has asked the City to share its policies so NRS can mirror the policies of the City. Councilman Caruso said the Board has created a new position of Chief Operating Officer and the City will be able to work with the squad through this liaison position. He said the Board wants to start 2017 under the new policies and management practices. He noted Bingo has picked up and the Squad will begin accepting non-emergency transports to create another source of revenue.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSTAIN – Caruso, ABSENT – None, Council moved to amend the budget and appropriate \$12,500 from unappropriated reserves to be used for the Norton Rescue Squad as the City Manager deems necessary.

Council had one transfer to confirm. This transfer was to Norton City Schools, dated September 28, 2016, in the amount of \$200,000 to cover September payroll expenditures.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous roll call vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to confirm the transfer to Norton City Schools as stated above.

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Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to go into closed meeting for discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publically held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (3) of the Code of Virginia, as amended.

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Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to go back into open meeting.

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Mayor Mays 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 Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

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

Dr. Perrigan provided copies of the line item school budget Council had requested and the copies have been placed on council members desks.

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Mr. Ramey presented Council with the VML Achievement Award the City received from the Virginia Municipal League for Infrastructure.

He placed at each member's desk the latest Retail Sales Tax Report.

The City Manager provided Council with a draft resolution as an outcome of the Coalfield Equity Summit held October 13. He asked Council to review the resolution and if Council prefers formal consideration, he will place the resolution on the next agenda. The draft has been sent out to all the regional governments and school systems for review and consideration for adoption.

Mayor Mays advised he had read the draft resolution and feels it is appropriate for adoption.

Mr. Ramey advised Council has been invited to lunch by seventh grade teachers from Norton Elementary and Middle School to discuss civics.

He provided Council with a copy of the Flag Rock Mountain Bike Trail System article that appeared in the Kingsport Times News Sunday edition.

Mr. Ramey said the Woodbooger Event was very organized, and City employees appreciate Councilman Fawbush's efforts because it made their jobs easier to work the event.

The Halloween Bash in the City Park is scheduled from 4-7 p.m., Saturday, October 22.

The 5k Glow Run has been rescheduled for April 8, 2017.

There were no comments from the City Attorney.

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In comments from Council:

Councilman Caruso asked if Council was going to approve the resolution that resulted from the Coalfields Equity Summit.

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Council was of consensus that the draft resolution was acceptable as presented.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the Resolution of the Coalfield Equity Summit for Equitable Funding of the Coalfield Region School Systems.

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Mr. Bradshaw advised that the press need to be made aware of the adoption of the resolution.

Councilman Caruso asked the City Manager where the Planning Commission was in reviewing the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Ramey advised that the Planning Commission should be completing their review of the Comprehensive Plan shortly, and they will provide Council with their recommended changes and updates.

Councilman Caruso asked if Council would have the Green Salamander Sanctuary Resolution on the next agenda to consider.

Mr. Ramey advised that he would place the resolution on Council's agenda for their consideration as soon as Dr. Wally Smith provides him with the information on the topic.

Councilman Caruso asked the City Manager to contact Boy Scout Leader Teddy Huff regarding building a kiosk at Flag Rock.

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He advised Pathfinders Outdoor Adventures will adopt a spot for litter pick up and will turn in the form this week.

Councilman Caruso said the new stamped crosswalks look great and are a big enhancement to downtown.

Councilman Caruso will prepare a report on the Virginia Municipal League Conference and email to Council.

Councilman Fultz stated he appreciates the quick timeline the Norton Rescue Squad Board has placed on overhauling the organization and policies to make it viable for the citizens of Norton.

He said John I. Burton's homecoming parade is scheduled for 6 p.m., Thursday, October 26th.

He concurs with Councilman Caruso on the stamped crosswalks, and he said the painting of street lanes and turn arrows looks great, as well. Councilman Fultz appreciates the dedication of the Public Works Department, working long hours this weekend with the Woodbooger Event and downtown on the crosswalk and street painting.

He said he enjoyed the Woodbooger Festival and it went well.

Councilman Fultz confirmed that Council will be meeting as normal on Tuesday, November 1.

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Councilwoman Belcher had no comments.

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Councilman Fawbush said the Coalfield Equity Summit had good presentations and their funding request from the state is a short-term solution. He stated Council's long-term objective is to create and protect the area's jobs.

He said the Woodbooger Festival was well attended and received a great amount of press coverage. Many individuals volunteered their time and he is appreciative of everyone's contribution toward making the event successful. Councilman Fawbush said he will prepare a report for Council, which will include a more comprehensive update on the festival.


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Mayor Mays said he appreciates each Council member.

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

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA


William Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:


Clerk of Council