

March 9, 2021 Council Meeting

The regular meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on March 9, 2021 in the cafeteria at Albert Harris Elementary School, 710 Smith Street at 6:00 PM with Mayor Kathy Lawson presiding. Other Council Members present included Danny Turner, Jennifer Bowles, Tammy Pearson and Chad Martin. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Assistant City Manager/City Attorney Eric Monday, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Community Development Director Mark McCaskill, and Police Chief Eddie Cassady.

Mayor Lawson called the meeting to order. Following the Pledge to the American Flag and invocation by Council Member Martin, Lawson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lawson explained that the meeting would follow COVID guidelines.

Conduct a public hearing regarding a planned Community Development Block Grant application for the Pine Hall Road area – Community Development Director Mark McCaskill welcomed residents to the public hearing for the Pine Hall Block Grant project and provided a brief overview of the neighborhood revitalization procedure, community involvement and contact information, activities involved in the project, and the grant application development timeline. McCaskill shared details of a second public hearing to be held at Albert Harris Elementary at a later date. McCaskill had extra income statement forms for anyone wishing to register for the program and encouraged residents wishing to register to do so before the second public hearing. McCaskill explained that contractors selected for project work will follow a full and open RFP situation and contractors must abide by state guidelines. The rehab specialist on this project is not a City employee. McCaskill was unsure how late applications can continue to be accepted for the program but they will do their best to accommodate late entries. He explained steps being taken to ensure that the City's application has the best chance for success. The City is working closely with outside consultants to get a better chance of approval this time. Council Member Turner requested an itemized list of how the money will be spent before the project begins. Mayor Lawson opened the floor to a public hearing. Ms. Walker of 710 Ainsley Street questioned which areas the project would cover. McCaskill shared the map of the area that would be covered and provided Walker a survey to complete. No one else approached the podium. Lawson closed the public hearing.

Consider adoption of a resolution in support of a community-based probation and pretrial court services program – City Attorney Eric Monday explained the purpose behind the resolution to expand pretrial services and/or local probation to localities without these services such as Martinsville. These services will help provide relief to the court system. Halifax County is serving as the fiscal agent for this grant funded program. If the City reverts to a town, it will have no bearing on this program for the other four locations. Monday explained that there are reporting requirements to Richmond but will check to see if there are any local reporting requirements. Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to adopt the resolution; Council Member Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

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Approve minutes from the February 23, 2021 Council Meetings – Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; Council Member Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Read a Proclamation acknowledging March 2021 as Women's History Month – Council Member Martin read the proclamation. Martin asked if the women of Council would stand to be recognized. Turner asked that Sallie Booker be added to the proclamation; Booker was a member of the House of Delegates and a former Martinsville resident.

Read and present a proclamation acknowledging the month of March as Red Cross Month – Mayor Lawson read the proclamation which will be presented to Ralph Lawson of the local Red Cross chapter.

Consider approval of Consent Agenda – Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; Council Member Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Business from the Floor – Mayor Lawson shared a letter received from resident Sarah Digregorio about an ongoing issue with a neighbor. Property Maintenance and the Police Department have been to the location numerous times but there are still issues.

Comments by City Council – Council Member Martin encouraged residents to continue to be safe. Council Member Pearson spoke regarding Women's History Month, stating there are so many women who have impacted her life and helped the City move forward. Pearson wanted to shout out the unsung heroes such as the teachers, health care workers, cafeteria workers, janitors, bank tellers and other women who don't get recognized near enough. Because March is Red Cross Month, Pearson reminded residents of the Blood Drive Thursday April 8 from 10:00am to 3:00pm at the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center and Museum; participants who donate will receive coupons for local businesses. Vice Mayor Bowles had the privilege of Zooming with Martinsville eighth graders and said they asked some good questions. Eighth grade student Ava Grant stated that she likes the clock tower, but asked if the City could revitalize the buildings for restaurants, apartments, etc. Another student expressed interest in being a student representative for City Council. Bowles told her that may be an option after COVID was over. Students stated that they would like to see more businesses and restaurants uptown. Students asked if there could be an ordinance to prevent high leases on local buildings; City Attorney Monday explained that the City had little control over that. Mayor Lawson reminded residents of the Hazardous Waste Day on April 24 in Bassett from 9:00am to 12:00noon and listed items that would be accepted. Lawson encouraged residents to support the Mustangs high school baseball team which started their games last week.

Comments by the City Manager – Towarnicki remind Council Members of the reversion work session on Wednesday.

Mayor Lawson advised Council would adjourn regular session and would go into Closed Session beginning at 6:35PM. In accordance with section 2.1-344 (A) Code of Virginia (1950,

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and as amended) and upon a motion by Vice Mayor Bowles, seconded by Council Member Martin with the following 5-0 recorded vote: Vice Mayor Bowles, aye; Council Member Pearson, aye; Council Member Martin, aye; Council Member Turner, aye; and Mayor Lawson, aye. Council convened in Closed Session to discuss the following matters: (A) Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, as authorized by Subsection 3. At the conclusion of Closed Session at 6:55pm, each returning member of Council certified that (1) only public business matters exempt from open meeting requirements were discussed in said Closed Session; and (2) only those business matters identified in the motion convening the Closed Session were heard, discussed, or considered during the meeting. A motion was made by Council Member Martin; seconded by Council Member Turner, with the following 5-0 recorded vote in favor to return to Open Session: Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Martin, aye; Vice Mayor Bowles, aye; Council Member Turner, aye; and Council Member Pearson, aye.

There being no further business, Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Council Member Pearson with all Council Members voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.

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Karen Roberts  
Clerk of Council

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Kathy Lawson  
Mayor