

May 24, 2022 Council Meeting

The regular meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on Tuesday, May 24, 2022 in Council Chambers, Municipal Building, at 7:00 PM with Mayor Kathy Lawson presiding. Other Council Members present included Danny Turner, Chad Martin, Jennifer Bowles and Tammy Pearson. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Assistant City Manager and City Attorney Eric Monday, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, and Police Lieutenant Doug Graham.

Mayor Lawson called the meeting to order and advised Council would go into Closed Session beginning at 6:00 PM. In accordance with section 2.1-344 (A) Code of Virginia (1950, and as amended) and upon a motion by Vice Mayor Bowles and seconded by Council Member Pearson with the following 4-0 recorded vote: Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Pearson, aye; Council Member Turner, aye; and Vice Mayor Bowles, aye. Council convened in Closed Session to discuss the following matters: (A) Discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected, as authorized by Subsection 6. Council Member Martin joined Closed Session at 6:45pm. At the conclusion of Closed Session, 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 Vice Mayor Bowles, seconded by Council Member Martin with the following 5-0 recorded vote in favor to return to Open Session: Council Member Turner, aye; Council Member Pearson, aye; Council Member Martin, aye; Vice Mayor Bowles, aye; and Mayor Lawson, aye. No action was taken out of closed session.

Approve minutes from the April 25, 2022 Neighborhood Meeting, the April 26, Council Meeting, and the April 27 Work Session - Bowles made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Hear an overview of the May 23, 2022 West End neighborhood tour and meeting – City Manager Towarnicki summarized the tour and the neighborhood meeting including those staff members in attendance, locations visited and concerns expressed by residents which will be addressed by the Property Maintenance, the Police Department and Public Works. Towarnicki said approximately 25 residents attended the meeting. The neighborhood meeting ended around 9:00pm but individual conversations continued until almost 10:00pm. Vice Mayor Bowles asked Towarnicki to follow up on concerns expressed over damaged trash cans and training the refuse employees to better handle those. Bowles had questions about the park at the old Housing Office and who owned that property. City Attorney Monday explained that the park is a dedicated park and appears to be owned by Baldwin Development Corporation and not the City. The park has not been maintained for many years and the trees falling from the property have caused damage to neighboring properties. There has been some interest in the past about making it a pocket park but neighbors were not interested in redeveloping that location, feeling that it would

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only draw people as a hangout. Monday encouraged Council to consider residents opinions and then if they decide to proceed with redeveloping the park, the City would need to take ownership of the property. Bowles mentioned the possibility of speed bumps in various areas, she asked what could be done to address the rat issue in the West-end area and she expressed concern about the entrance to Massey Street and if the Transportation Safety Commission could review that area. Council Member Turner asked about an abandoned right-of-way and the process for a resident to take ownership of that property. Council Member Pearson said she heard from residents voicing concerns that they've called or visited City departments and they feel that their concerns are not being addressed. She asked if a list could be consolidated from the neighborhood meetings with documentation of steps taken to address those concerns and costs associated with it and then those answers be provided to residents at a Council meeting or the next neighborhood meeting. Vice Mayor Bowles suggested that a brief recap of actions taken from previous concerns be presented at the next neighborhood meeting. Towarnicki explained that he will make a note of the concerns and then he will put a response to each item. Mayor Lawson wants to see a record of concerns and action taken to address those.

Consider setting a public hearing for Council's June 14, 2022 meeting for the purpose of receiving names of citizens interested in appointments for one 3-year term ending June 30, 2025, and one unexpired 3-year term ending on June 30, 2024 on the Martinsville City School Board – City Manager Towarnicki explained that interested parties must have their name mentioned at the public hearing to be considered for the board. Bowles made a motion to set the public hearing for June 14, 2022; Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Consider approval of Budget Ordinance 2022-U-2 on second reading – City Manager Towarnicki pointed out that the summary sheet and ordinance were revised. Towarnicki summarized the proposed budget and actions taken towards approval of the budget so far. Towarnicki explained there were revisions made to the library and school budgets and a revision to the tax assessment note at the bottom of the ordinance. Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to amend the ordinance; Turner seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor. Council Member Pearson expressed concern over the schools use of ESSER funds and potential reimbursement by the City. Pearson touched on Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley's presentation about personal property tax rates and what action Council should take. Council Member Martin asked Easley if the City had ever gotten back 100% of personal property taxes. Easley said to answer Martin's question, she does not do the collection, the Treasurer's office does the collection and she has no idea what the Finance team uses for collection rates because they don't have those discussion. With the personal property, what has happened is information with a conversation that Easley initiated with the Finance team in March. They discussed just the passenger cars, the trucks and the motorcycles. That number that appears to be budgeted looks like it's only for passenger cars, trucks and motorcycles. It doesn't include any kind of

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budget manipulation, trend analysis or anything for the rest of it. Just with that assessment that she is projecting for passenger cars, trucks and motorcycles is already going to exceed what she assessed for last year for everything. They did \$81million last year in assessments for all personal property that includes passenger cars, trucks, motorcycles, ambulances, trailers, RVs, boats, jet skis, and she knows she's missing 6-7 other things but that's the point. We are looking at probably about another \$9million that was never included in the budget because we don't have these conversations. Bowles thanked Easley and stated that she was not in favor of making a change, she likes the budget as is and she will not vote for an amendment. Mayor Lawson said if Council sees a change in the budget then they can amend it at a later date. Pearson expressed concern that Council is leaving nothing towards reversion, stating it feels like they are giving them a blank check. Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to approve the Budget Ordinance 2022-U-2 on second reading; Council Member Martin seconded the motion with the following 4-1 roll call vote: Vice Mayor Bowles, aye; Council Member Martin, aye; Council Member Turner, aye; Mayor Lawson, aye; and Council Member Pearson, nay.

Consider approval of the consent agenda – Bowles made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented; Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Business from the Floor – None

Comments by City Council – Council Member Turner shared that he is looking forward to Memorial Day and honoring those who gave their life in combat to protect our rights. Wreaths will be placed in honor of those veterans who died in combat. Council Member Martin asked the community to pray for the Texas community and the tragedy there. Council Member Pearson congratulated Martinsville High School graduates, Dr. Talley and Martinsville teachers as well as the upcoming graduates in Henry County. Vice Mayor Bowles echoed Martin and Pearson's sentiments and congratulated Martinsville High School graduates. She was proud when they toured the West End neighborhood and stated overall everything looked nice and she was pleased that most issues were already being addressed by Property Maintenance. She was born and raised and still resides in the West End area. Mayor Lawson congratulated Tim Martin and Martin Plaza and Showroom for receiving the Uptown Business of the Year Award. Lawson congratulated all Martinsville High School graduates. Memorial Day is May 30; 50 flags will be placed at Roselawn and the remainder will be displayed in Uptown Martinsville totaling 160 flags. June 12 at 2:00pm at the Historic Courthouse there will be a Flag Day celebration and recognition of the Army's birthday. The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will premiere the movie documentary, "A Conversation with American Heroes from Martinsville and Henry County" on Sunday, May 29, 2022 at 3:00pm in the Walker Theatre of Patrick & Henry Community College. Lawson also shared that the Martinsville Mustangs will begin their season on Thursday with an away game and another home game on Friday

Comments by the City Manager – City Manager Towarnicki stated that Monday is Memorial Day so City Hall will be closed. He invited the public to a Memorial Day event at Roselawn

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Monday at noon and on June 9 at 10:00am there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the battery storage project on Maple Street.

There being no further business, Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Council Member Turner with all Council Members voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

Kathy Lawson, Mayor