

June 14, 2022 Council Meeting

The regular meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on Tuesday, June 14, 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, Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley, and Police Chief Eddie Cassidy.

Mayor Lawson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Council Member Martin lead the pledge to the flag and invocation.

Approve minutes from the May 3, 2022 Work Session, May 4, 2022 Work Session, the May 10, 2022 Council Meeting, and May 18, 2022 Work Session – 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. Mayor Lawson requested that her wording on the May 3 meeting minutes be corrected regarding MURA funding.

Consider a public hearing 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 – Mayor Lawson opened the public hearing. Heather Blankenbaker of 908 Hazelwood Lane stated that she would like to be considered for the school board. Council Member Martin mentioned Jim Woods who would like to be considered. Council Member Pearson stated that Blake Shumate of 1204 Valley View Road would like to be considered for the vacancy. Vice Mayor Bowles mentioned Michael Williamson, Shelby White and Kathy Carter all of which would like to be considered. Hearing no additional names, the hearing was closed. Interviews will be schedule prior to the next council meeting

Consider authorizing the City Treasurer to issue a refund resulting from verification update on estimated and prorated BPOL tax for a local business for tax year 2020 – Commissioner of Revenue Easley explained the need for the refund. The Treasurer needs approval since the total is over \$5,000. Pearson made a motion to authorize the City Treasurer to issue a refund totaling \$13,481.54; Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Consider authorizing staff to execute a Memorandum of Understanding for Bird scooters operation in the City – City Attorney Monday explained the need for the MOU which was modeled after the MOU in Harrisonburg and seems to be working well there. Bird scooters should be up and running by the end of June with potentially 50 scooters. There will be a 24-hour contact number probably in Texas along with a local representative. Martin said some business owners have expressed concern that not all businesses were contacted and were concerned that the scooters would be parked on the sidewalk and in the way. Bowles asked for an update on helmets and if they would be made available. Pearson made a motion to execute the MOU; Martin seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Consider adoption of a resolution changing the membership policy for the Arts & Cultural Committee – City Attorney Monday detailed the Arts & Cultural Committee and the reason the

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board is set up the way it is. Since MURA no longer exists, that seat will become a member of the West Piedmont Planning District Commission. Pearson made a motion to adopt the resolution; Turner seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Consider adoption of a resolution accepting ownership of the former National Guard Armory on Commonwealth Boulevard, and authorize staff to execute transfer documents – City Attorney Monday explained that this offer was unexpected but the property has been sitting vacant for several years. Once Council votes on the acceptance of the building, a facility study should be done to look for asbestos, environmental issues, and the overall condition of the facility. After the inspection, consideration will be given for the best use of the property and community input should be considered. The resolution in the original agenda packet has been revised so Council is asked to approve the updated version provided to them at the beginning of tonight's meeting. Pearson made a motion to adopt the revised resolution and authorize staff to execute documents; Turner seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Turner requested a review of the City Attorney's contract to "clean up" the old contract and City Attorney Monday's obligation solely to Martinsville and not surrounding areas. Pearson seconded the motion. Bowles made a motion to move the topic to a future meeting after Council has the opportunity to review the contract. Monday said any changes to the contract would require his consent. Martin would also like to review the contract before making any decisions. Lawson requests a copy of the contract and stated that this is a personnel matter and should be considered as such during a Closed Session and not in an Open Council meeting. Bowles expressed concern that Turner's request did not follow the proper rule of order and had nothing to do with the topics on the agenda. Mayor Lawson demanded no further discussion on the topic at tonight's meeting.

Mayor Lawson invited Web Garrett, son of Phil and Karen Garrett and an Eagle Scout from Troop 326 to the podium. Garrett is working towards his merit badge by rebuilding a bench at the SPCA.

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

Business from the Floor – None

Comments by City Council – Council Member Pearson said Web Garrett is an outstanding young man. Council Member Turner received a complaint on Smith Road and Katherine related to kudzu and asked if that could be sprayed instead being cut back. Turner questioned paving locations and for confirmation that Smith Lake Road is being paved this week. Turner said he had a resident come to him looking for a home, he feels that a few of the homes on the demolition list could be remodeled or restored with a small fund of money to flip homes and put them back in the hands of families, not renters. Turner suggested using some of the COVID funds to recruit black and minority police officers. Turner said today was Flag Day; they replaced 5 flags in the Uptown area with the largest flag raised at the Library. Vice Mayor Bowles congratulated

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Garrett, stating that she is excited about his Eagle Scout project. This weekend she spoke at the UVA Sorenson Leadership program. Larry Roberts, Executive Director told her that he returned to Martinsville to visit the Ground Floor. Bowles said that it is great that Martinsville has great businesses and said the Sorenson group was impressed with the local Police Department. Bowles hopes all Council Members will follow Roberts Rules of Order going forward. Mayor Lawson said Sorenson is dedicated to visiting Martinsville and it's a great group of people from all across the Commonwealth. Lawson mentioned that vines are taking over the trees along the trail on Depot Street and asked who would be responsible for maintaining the trees in that area. Lawson attended the Distinguished Alumni program for Patrick & Henry Community College which honored 12 past graduates. This past Sunday she attended an event and had the honor to give greetings from Martinsville in celebration of the Army's birthday sharing that the Army is 247 years old today and the largest branch of military. Lawson stated that it was Flag Day and that flags will be flown in the City on Monday also for Juneteenth. Tomorrow is her husband Ralph's birthday and also City Manager Towarnicki's birthday. Lawson wished a happy belated birthday to City Attorney Monday who celebrated last week. Sunday is Father's Day so everyone should give your dad a hug. Lawson said the Mustangs will play Thursday night at Hooker Field; this past Saturday there were over 1300 people in attendance. Lawson requested City Attorney Monday serve a show cause order to Comcast for violation of their contract, stating that there have been no employees serving the local facility for some time. Monday confirmed that the Martinsville franchise agreement requires that there be an office in Martinsville. Lawson welcomed The Wellness Bar to Martinsville and said their open house would be Saturday morning at 11:30am. At the west end meeting, there was a man who spoke regarding not having car shows in Martinsville, as a Council they can make amendments that will free up the restrictions that would allow car shows going forward. Monday said he would be happy to look into what would be needed to update that ordinance. A statement was made previously that the Mayor and Vice Mayor boycotted the Martinsville High School graduation; Lawson stated that was a lie. Bowles was unable to attend because she was scheduled to be in a wedding that day and Lawson's husband had surgery and a family event that she had to drive to since he was recovering. To say they boycotted graduation is just malicious and shame on the person who said it and those who repeated it. Bowles said she's served on Council since she was 24 and she likes to have a nice work-life balance, she cannot attend everything. Bowles brought up the concerns voiced about Third Street and a maintenance violation on A Street and questioned how long before those issues are corrected. Towarnicki explained that they are looking at Third Street and ways to correct the drainage issue without it causing issues at neighboring properties. Pearson asked for an update on the 4-wheeler complaints. Police Chief Cassady said there was a media release done and extra patrol has been added to those areas of complaints.

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Comments by the City Manager – City Manager Towarnicki congratulated Web Garrett, sharing that about 20 years ago his son earned his Eagle badge in Troop 326 also. His son went to medical school and applied to residency in Louisville, he said having his Eagle badge came in handy. To earn the Eagle badge is a big deal that will follow a young man for many years. Towarnicki shared that Monday is Juneteenth so the municipal building will be closed. There will be another neighborhood tour and meeting in the Northside area on Monday June 27.

There being no further business, Bowles made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55pm.

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

Kathy Lawson, Mayor