

June 28, 2022 Council Meeting

The regular meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on June 28, 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, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Public Information Officer Kendall Davis, Safety Manager John Turner, and Police Lieutenant Chad Rhoads.

Mayor Lawson called the meeting to order and advised Council would go into Closed Session beginning at 6:00 PM. In accordance with section 2.1-3711 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 Member Martin was traveling and unable to attend the meeting in person. Virginia Code 2.2-3708.2 would give Martin the option to participate in the Council meeting by phone. Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to allow Martin to participate telephonically; Council Member Pearson seconded the motion with all present Council Members voting in favor. Martin participated by phone until he arrived at City Hall at 7:10pm

Council convened in Closed Session to discuss the following matters: (A) Appointments to boards and commissions, as authorized by Subsection 1.

Council returned to regular session at 7:00pm. Mayor Lawson explained that Closed Session would recess and would reconvene after the regular Council meeting. Mayor Lawson welcomed everyone. Council Member Pearson offered invocation and the pledge.

Consider approval and adoption of the 2021 update of the West Piedmont Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan – Safety Director John Turner summarized the need for the resolution. Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to adopt the resolution; Council Member Turner seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Approve minutes from the May 23, 2022 West End Neighborhood Meeting, the May 24, 2022 Council Meeting and the June 14, 2022 Council Meeting – Vice Mayor Bowles made the motion to approve all minutes as presented; Council Member Pearson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Hear an overview of the June 27, 2022 Northside neighborhood tour and meeting – City Manager Towarnicki detailed the Northside neighborhood tour and meeting that was held the night before, concerns and how those issues are being addressed. The meeting was well attended with approximately 25 residents from the neighborhood. Residents voiced several concerns which will be addressed by the Police Department, Public Works or the Inspections Department. Towarnicki has created a compilation sheet of resident concerns, the date, which department was notified and how the matter has been resolved. This information will be provided for future meetings and hopefully will be available for review soon on the City website. Council Member Martin asked that the date the issue was resolved be included in the spreadsheet.

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Hear an update from Martinsville-Henry County Family YMCA regarding the City/YMCA contract for services related to City parks & recreation programs – Courtney Hairston, YMCA Sports Director updated Council on upcoming Spring and Summer sports including baseball, Youth in Motion running programs, swimming, golf leagues, etc.

Business from the Floor – Michael Sanguedolce of 708 Starling Avenue has been a resident in Martinsville for 4 years. The truck route on Church Street and Starling Avenue is hazardous to both residents and property and he feels the routes should be moved and “no thru trucks” signs installation. Council Member Turner asked if the City had any control to stop truck traffic on Starling, City Manager Towarnicki said that would be something they could discuss with the highway department. Sanguedolce said he has spoken to DOT in Richmond who told him that the route change would be a local decision.

Leroy Hairston of 109 Terrance Street thanked Council for attending the Albert Harris neighborhood meeting to listen to the resident’s concerns. As a walker, he sees people litter regularly including at a Funeral Home parking lot causing it to look trashy. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Hairston expressed concern regarding speeding traffic on Fayette Street and noted that many of those drivers are young people. He picks up the trash but it takes a community to help keep the neighborhoods clean. Mayor Lawson said his concerns would be relayed to the Police Department. Vice Mayor Bowles encouraged Hairston to report any issues with litter, trash or speeding any time and every time he sees the issues.

Keith Owen, 1708 Meadowview Lane is curious about where the committees for ARPA funds stand. Mayor Lawson said they are working through logistics and applications; the Uptown group will be presenting at the next meeting and a strategic planning session is being scheduled. Owens is seeking funds for a homeless shelter in Martinsville stating that there is an uptick of homeless in the area, he saw 5 new homeless people this past week.

Comments by City Council – Pearson stated that she would prefer not to vote on the school board applicants until Council can receive public input from parents, she said it is important to involve the residents in these decisions. Martin reference the Brownfield Summit where they discussed the ways to acquire Brownfield grants. The lead person from Philadelphia from EPA was there and announced 5 localities that had received \$500,000 including Martinsville Virginia. Martin asked those who participate in grants to stand for a round of applause. Turner shared that Martinsville will celebrate openings of three new businesses in Uptown Martinsville including Roosky’s Bar & Grill. July 4, the Mustangs will be honoring five World War II veterans including a 99-year-old veteran who will be throwing out the first pitch at the Mustangs game. Mayor Lawson and Turner will be providing free watermelon to those in attendance at the Mustangs game. Bowles asked City Manager Towarnicki about the Massey Street traffic patterns and requested that it be put on the Transportation Committee’s agenda. She inquired if Booker Street will be on the paving schedule soon and if Council could get a breakdown of how many residential and commercial roads are paved each year. Bowles asked if the

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Commissioner of Revenue could provide a list of new Martinsville businesses that have obtained a business license since 2014-to-present and their location in the City. Lawson received a call from a resident on Massey Street who was at the West End meeting and wanted to follow up about the rat issue; Towarnicki said they had not had the opportunity to smoke the lines but it is on the schedule. Lawson recognized the new businesses in Uptown Martinsville including the Wellness Bar which she feels will do very well. Mustangs play tonight at 7:00pm and will have fireworks on July 9. Lawson said that attendance at the games has picked up and the park is in wonderful condition. Pearson referenced Turner's previous request about City Attorney Monday's contract and said she would like to continue that motion. Mayor Lawson confirmed that there had already been a motion and a second and that it was pointed out that with it being a personnel matter, that it would be discussed in Closed session where it is appropriate and final determination would be made in an open session. Pearson made a motion to use funds to obtain outside council to review the City Attorney contract before it automatically renews in 60days. Turner seconded the motion, stating it would be a good idea to have outside people to review the contract to ensure it is in the City's best interest. Turner said since the writer of the contract is City Attorney Monday, that the contract covers the best interests of Monday more than the residents in Martinsville. Bowles stated that she respects everyone's opinion but feels that this is all a vicious attack on Monday by discussing his contract in a public forum. The only two people Council hires is the City Attorney and the City Manager. Turner said that since no one wanted to discuss the contract with him, he brought it up in regular session. Pearson said if it wasn't brought up then the contract would have been auto-renewed. Motion fails with a 2-3 vote: Pearson and Turner voted in favor, Bowles, Lawson and Martin voted nay. Council may choose to revisit the option to hire an outside agency to review the contract at a later date.

Comments by the City Manager – City Manager Towarnicki referred to the Red Cross plaques installed throughout the city that indicates a resident at a location may have a medical condition. The city does not do that anymore and has not done it for many years. The Electric Department is in the process of taking those signs down. There is very little the city can do to get power on to a particular residence any faster than what they are doing to get power to a wider area. If there is someone in a residence with medical needs or on oxygen, the provider of that equipment may install a sign to flag first responders who approach the home. Turner was in support of removing the signs, explaining that a resident expressed concern that the sign could be a red flag that there was a vulnerable person at the residence Towarnicki stated that Monday is the July 4 holiday so the municipal building will be closed.

Mayor Lawson explained that Council would recess back into Closed Session at 8:05pm

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

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Mayor Bowles, seconded by Council Member Pearson 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.

Council Member Martin made a motion to appoint Ann Gibson to the Piedmont Regional Community Services Board for a 3-year term ending June 30, 2025; Vice Mayor Bowles seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Vice Mayor Bowles made a motion to reappoint Jonathan Martin to the Planning Commission for 4-year terms ending June 30, 2026; Council Member Pearson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Pearson made a motion to reappoint Austin Roberson to the Planning Commission for 4-year terms ending June 30, 2026; Vice Mayor Bowles seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Martin made a motion to reappoint Joseph Martin to the Planning Commission for 4-year terms ending June 30, 2026; Council Member Turner seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Mayor Lawson noted that no action was taken on appointments to the School Board since one candidate was absent and unable to interview. The interview will be conducted prior to the next Council meeting and a decision made then. In the meantime, the School Board will continue to have a quorum and the ability to conduct business.

A motion was then made by Council Member Turner to terminate the existing contract with the City Attorney and rewrite a new contract with the buyout clause amount of \$50,000. The motion was seconded by Council Member Pearson. Mayor Lawson once again reminded Council members this was inappropriate discussion for open session. With no further discussion the vote was called and the motion failed on a 2-3 vote with Council Members Turner and Pearson voting in favor, and Mayor Lawson, Vice Mayor Bowles, and Council Member Martin voting against.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

Kathy Lawson, Mayor