

March 14, 2023 Council Meeting

The regular meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on March 14, 2023 in Council Chambers, Municipal Building, at 7:00 PM with Mayor LC Jones presiding. Other Council Members present included Kathy Lawson, Aaron Rawls and Tammy Pearson. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts and Police Chief Rob Fincher.

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order and advised Council would go into Closed Session beginning at 5:30 PM. In accordance with the Code of Virginia, Title 2.2 Chapter 37, Freedom of Information Act and upon a motion by Council Member Pearson and seconded by Council Member Lawson with the following 4-0 recorded vote: Vice Mayor Rawls, aye; Council Member Pearson, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; and Council Member Lawson, aye. Council convened in Closed Session to discuss the following matters: (A) Appointments to boards and commissions, as authorized by Subsection 1, (B) Interviews of prospective candidates for employment, as authorized by Subsection 1, (C) 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, and (D) 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.

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 Council Member Lawson; seconded by Vice Mayor Rawls with the following 4-0 recorded vote in favor to return to Open Session: Vice Mayor Rawls, aye; Council Member Pearson, aye; Council Member Lawson, aye; and Mayor Jones, aye.

Council Member Pearson made a motion to appoint Vice Mayor Rawls to the West Piedmont Planning District Board of Commissioners for a term coincident with his Council term. Council Member Lawson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Pearson made a motion to appoint Mayor Jones to Virginia First Cities. Council Member Lawson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Pearson made a motion to reappoint Mandy Gordon to the Arts & Cultural Committee for a 3-year term ending March 31, 2026. Vice Mayor Rawls seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

No other action was taken out of closed session.

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order. Mayor Jones lead the pledge to the American flag and Rev. Lee Hagwood of Agape Bible Christian Fellowship, 38 Corse Avenue in Martinsville,

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offered invocation. Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting, stating printed agendas could be found in the back of the room and on the City website for those watching from home.

Consider a presentation of proclamations – Council Member Lawson read and presented the proclamation for Natalie LaPrade. Mayor Jones read and presented the proclamation for Jahmal Jones. Jahmal Jones presented Mayor Jones with a Martinsville track shirt. Vice Mayor Rawls read and presented the proclamation for Rennie Hairston. Mayor Jones encouraged other youth in the community to follow the path of these individuals.

Recognize City Employees who are eligible for Service Awards for the period January 1 – March 31, 2023 – City Manager Towarnicki thanked the staff and recognized those employees for their service. Mayor Jones thanked the employees and said their commitment does not go unnoticed.

SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS FIRST QUARTER - FISCAL YEAR 22-23 FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1 – MARCH 31, 2023			
First Name	Last Name	Location	YOS
JAMIE	HALEY	PUBLIC WORKS	5
MEGAN	STRAIT	CITY MANAGER	5
WILLIAM	WARNICK	POLICE DEPT	10
CLINTON	HALL	SHERIFF DEPT.	10
JONATHAN	COX	POLICE DEPT	10
JENNIFER	COPLIN	CIRCUIT COURT	10
HAROLD	PRUITT	SEWER MAINTENANCE	10
MATTHEW	OLDHAM	CENTRAL GARAGE	10
JAMIE	CRUISE	SHERIFF DEPT.	15
BENJAMIN	PETERS	POLICE DEPT	15
JOHN	KAHLE	WATER RESOURCES	15
DANIEL	MORRISON	ELECTRIC	25
ERIKA	HAMILTON	CIRCUIT COURT	30

Here an overview of the March 13, 2023 West End neighborhood tour and meeting – City Manager Towarnicki summarized the West End neighborhood tour, streets visited and concerns discussed. Towarnicki explained the City park project and detailed the neighborhood meeting that ended at 8:15pm,

Approve minutes from the February 27, 2023 Southside Neighborhood Meeting and the February 28, 2023 Council Meeting – Council Member Lawson made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; Vice Mayor Rawls seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Hear an update from Joanie Petty, Executive Director of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Blue Ridge – Petty said what she’s heard from the new Council is very positive and she’s excited to share updates on the Boys & Girls Club. She’s worked in Martinsville since 2006 and families are excited about the upgrades going on in the West End area. She will encourage the families to reach out to Council and share what they would like to see in the community. Martinsville is 1 of 5 clubs in the State of Virginia as part of a national organization of 5,000 Clubs. Petty

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shared details about how early the local branch reopened after COVID and how that gave them notoriety and leverage outside of the local area for supporters and funds which in return allowed them to serve more kids. There are 380 registered members with a wait list. The Boys & Girls Clubs are in every school in the City of Martinsville and they are seeing previous students become staff. They have secured 3 of the 4 vans needed through Nelson Automotive. Petty detailed numerous donations to the Club which allows them to do more with student participants. Petty explained how citizens can sign-up students and how the waiting list works. Council Member Pearson said that Petty and her staff fill a wonderful need in the community by truly nurturing the children in our area. The services provided by the Boys & Girls Club is far beyond child care and Pearson thanked Petty and her team. Petty explained the public speaking Youth of the Year program provided at the high school.

Hear information related to the establishment of a new board titled “Citizen Advisory Board” – Council Member Pearson read the resolution and encouraged residents to apply for the board. Council Member Lawson made a motion to approve the resolution. Vice Mayor Rawls seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

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CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD – Established by the authority granted in VA §15.2-1107, the Board provides judicious advice, ideas and feedback from a citizen perspective related to both present and future matters and plans of the City. The board will serve as a formal, consistent liaison between the Council, City staff and citizens. The board will study, analyze and formulate well-developed, thoughtful recommendations, insights, and ideas based upon citizen feedback and discuss/present to Council. The board will act as a two-way sounding board for the Council and citizens, and be involved in the planning of the current and future state of Martinsville. The board will help disseminate community information to the citizens to broaden the City’s outreach. The board will meet as determined by consensus of the board members. The board shall choose a chair and vice-chair.

RESIDENCY – *Must be a Martinsville City resident* qualified by knowledge and experience to make decisions on questions of community social needs. The board will be made up of eight adults (ages 18 and up): two from West End, two from Southside, two from Northside and two from East Martinsville/Druid Hills.


TERMS: *Four members will serve a two-year term and four members will serve a three-year term.*

CONTACT: City Manager’s office, 403-5185, P.O. Box 1112, Martinsville, VA 24114

Name & Address	Initial Appointment	Term Expires	Full Term

NOTE: If a Board or Commission does not specify number of terms a person can serve, then the number of terms defaults to three terms per a policy adopted by City Council December 11, 1990. (per city attorney 4/26/11) [Two](#) exceptions (1) if no one is interested (2) no one qualified has applied, then the person holding the position can serve another term if Council chooses.

Council Members
 LC Jones, Mayor
 Aaron Rawls, Vice-Mayor
 Kathy Lawson
 Tammy Pearson



City Manager
 Leon E. Towarnicki
Clerk of Council
 Karen Roberts

RESOLUTION

ESTABLISHING THE CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

WHEREAS, in an effort to provide advice, ideas, and feedback from a citizen perspective related to both present and future matters and plans of the City as well as to serve as a formal, consistent liaison between Council, staff, and citizens; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the wealth of talent, knowledge, and experience that exists in our community as well as the interest of many citizens desiring to become more active and engaged in local government matters;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by Martinsville City Council on this 14th day of March, 2023, that under the authority granted by VA §15.2-1107, it hereby establishes a new board titled Citizen Advisory Board, the purpose of which will be to provide feedback to Council on a variety matters impacting the City and to broaden the City’s outreach.

LC Jones, Mayor

ATTEST: Clerk of Council

55 West Church Street, P. O. Box 1112, Martinsville, VA 24114-1112 276-403-5180 Fax: 276-403-5280
www.martinsville-va.gov

Conduct a public hearing for the purpose of receiving names of citizens interested in an appointment to a partial term on City Council ending December 31, 2024 – Those expressing interest in the vacant Council seat are: (1) Teresa Spencer of 1506 Mulberry Road - has been a resident of Martinsville her whole life and would like to be considered for City Council; (2) Khalil Baker of 110 Kings Row - shared his vision for Martinsville and his desire to serve on City Council. He is a graduate of Hampton University and new to the area, having moved to

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Martinsville eight months ago; (3) Lawrence Mitchell of 700 Second Street - would like to be considered for Council; and (4) Joseph Martin of 27 East Church Street - is a local business owner and would like to add his name for consideration for the vacancy on Council also. Mayor Jones Closed the public hearing. City Manager Towarnicki explained that the Closed session scheduled for Wednesday March 15 would be to discuss the vacancy and interview applicants.

Business from the Floor – Leroy Hairston, Jr. of Terry Street is very excited for tonight's meeting, he sees progress. Hairston requested that more notice be given for neighborhood meetings so more residents are able to attend. Council Member Lawson asked Police Chief Fincher to explain the cameras at the intersection, a concern expressed by Hairston at the Neighborhood meeting the night before. Fincher explained that the cameras with the solar panels are not regular cameras, they capture license tag information only and are not for general surveillance. So far since having those installed, they were able to locate two missing adults and have been able to solve every hit and run in the area. These cameras are being installed and funded by Operation Bold Blue Line. Those cameras will be installed near businesses and not in residential neighborhoods.

Comments by City Council – Council Member Pearson thanked the Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce for hosting the Fast Track event; she thought it was a great success and it shows residents that there is a plethora of dedicated businesses here in Martinsville and Henry County. Pearson asked residents to support local businesses. Shout out to Martinsville City Schools, the Police Department and others for their booths at Fast Track and thank you to MiNET for providing internet during the event. Pearson was unable to attend the neighborhood tour the night before because she was feeling under the weather. Council Member Lawson shared that this afternoon she attended the ribbon cutting at Biscuitville in Collinsville. Hazardous waste day is April 22. Lawson congratulated former Council Member Danny Turner who was presented an award for his dedication to ensure all local veterans were recognized. Lawson asked City Manager Towarnicki about Memorial Day services, sharing that she would like to reinstate those events that were cancelled during COVID. There are two new businesses coming to the Villages shopping center; the old Sears building was sold and she's delighted to see progress in that area. Vice Mayor Rawls would love to get some public service announcements posted about the City. He's received a number of calls about predatory real estate investors and feels the residents should be informed. Rawls said Martinsville needs volunteers; if you are someone who wants to hustle and see changes then a community board would be a great start. The community development block grant is still ongoing but delayed because it's difficult to find workers to commit to doing the work. Mayor Jones thanked the athletes who were presented proclamations at tonight's meeting and the schools for what they continue to produce for the City and Henry County. The applications for the Citizens Advisory Board is open for anyone wishing to apply. There are plenty of parks throughout the city,

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attending those advisory meetings will be helpful to give Council Members insight for what residents want.

Comments by the City Manager – City Manager Towarnicki said any contractors are welcome to reach out to his office; lack of committed skilled workers is what’s causing the delay in several City projects. Jobs are open for bids but the City cannot find qualified contractors to bid on the work. There will be upcoming budget meetings with department heads with plans to present the budget to Council during the April 25 meeting. The first reading and public hearing will be May 9 with final adoption on the budget being May 23. There will be work sessions prior to the final adoption. Towarnicki mentioned outside agencies who are also invited to the work sessions and if Council desires other agencies to attend, to let him know. Towarnicki gave the City Water Department a shout out; he received a letter from the Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water notifying him that the City had received a gold award for 2022. After 41 years with the City, Towarnicki announced his retirement effective August 1.

There being no further business, Council Member Lawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm.

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

LC Jones, Mayor