

April 11, 2023 Council Meeting

A meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on April 11, 2023 in Council Chambers, Municipal Building, at 7:00 PM with Mayor LC Jones presiding. Other Council Members present included Kathy Lawson, Aaron Rawls, Lawrence Mitchell and Tammy Pearson. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki.

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order and advised Council would go into Closed Session beginning at 6:30 PM. In accordance with the Code of Virginia, Title 2.2 Chapter 37, Freedom of Information Act and upon a motion by Council Member Lawson and seconded by Council Member Pearson with the following 5-0 recorded vote: Vice Mayor Rawls, aye; Council Member Pearson, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Council Member Mitchell, 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) 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 and seconded by Vice Mayor Rawls with the following recorded vote: Jones, aye; Rawls, aye; Lawson, aye; Mitchell, aye; and Pearson, aye.

Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls made a motion to appoint Susan Tyler to the Citizen Advisory Board (Druid Hills) for a 3-year term ending April 30, 2026. Council Member Tammy Pearson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Kathy Lawson made a motion to appoint Robert Price to the Citizen Advisory Board (City Business Owner/Operator) for a 3-year term ending April 30, 2026. Vice Mayor Rawls seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Council Member Lawson made a motion to appoint Charlie Holland to the Citizen Advisory Board (West End) for a 3-year term ending April 30, 2026. Council Member Pearson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Vice Mayor Rawls made a motion to replace the current citizen rep position (held by Jennifer Bowles) on the West Piedmont Planning District Board of Commissioners with Joe Martin for an unexpired 3-year term ending June 30, 2025. Council Member Tammy Pearson seconded the motion with a 4-1 vote: Pearson, Rawls, Jones and Mitchel voting in favor; Lawson voting against.

City Manager Leon Towarnicki shared that the City has secured a City Attorney after interviewing several potentials. The City has entered into an agreement with Sands Anderson Law Firm out of Richmond, Virginia. Representatives Jesse Bausch and Stephen Durbin were present to share available services for Martinsville as well as details about their corporate size and other locations represented.

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Approve minutes from the March 28 Council Meeting and the April 4, 2023 Closed Session

– Vice Mayor Rawls made a motion to approve minutes as presented. Council Member Pearson seconded the motion. Council Member Lawson asked that her request for a bimonthly report from Sands Anderson for legal expenses and a year-to-date total be added to the March 28 minutes.

Read and present a proclamation recognizing the week of April 23 – 29, 2023 as National Library Week – Council Member Pearson said she knows the library is near and dear to so many residents and important to both children and adults. Pearson read the proclamation which was presented to members of the Blue Ridge Library Board. Rick Ward thanked Council and welcomed them to visit the library at any time.

Consider approval of a resolution recognizing April as Fair Housing Month in the City of Martinsville – Vice Mayor Rawls read the resolution. Council Member Lawson made a motion to approve the resolution; Council Member Pearson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Consider a request by the Virginia Municipal League to submit nominations for membership on the VML 2023 Policy Committees – City Manager Towarnicki summarized the VML policies and the benefit of Council participation. Council Members requested that these nominations be moved to the next meeting.

Consider approval of the consent agenda – Council Member Lawson made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Vice Mayor Rawls seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Business from the Floor – No one approached the podium.

Comments by City Council – Council Member Mitchell discussed the ATV accident on Second Street this past week, appealing to the public, families and parents and stating that this is a very dangerous practice. Those involved were riding on the road without helmets and both had to be flown to Roanoke for treatment of their injuries. Council Member Pearson asked the community to pray for the Country since there have been more mass shootings and encouraged residents to reach out to local and state representatives with ideas and solutions to help correct the problem. There are several local upcoming proms and activities, she prays that the students will have fun but be safe. Pearson asked the City Manager for updates and action taken from recent neighborhood meetings. She would like to meet with Police Chief Fincher regarding some issues that business owners have conveyed related to homeless residents. Council Member Lawson pointed out that it is race weekend so Martinsville is full of visitors in the community. Lawson encourages residents to smile, welcome them to the area and help direct them to where they need to go. Lawson announced that the Historic Courthouse will have a lecture April 16 on the restoration of garden clubs of Virginia, Lawson said these are always informative and well attended. Congratulations to the Historical Society on the ground-breaking for the addition to the Historical Courthouse. Lawson gave one last reminder about Hazardous Waste Day on

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April 22 from 9:00am to 12:00pm at the PSA warehouse in Bassett along with the Drug Take Back at the Martinsville Fire Department which will be a drive-thru event. Vice Mayor Rawls announced that he has given notice to his full-time employer effective April 14 and plans to take a few months to focus solely on Martinsville concerns; he encouraged residents to reach out to him with ideas since the more people involved the more traction those concerns will get. Near and dear to his heart, Rawls plans to focus on City ordinances and code enforcement on unkempt and vacant properties. He asked that anyone interested in expanding on housing throughout the City, contractors and developers to please reach out to him. Rawls will focus on event planning and feels that Martinsville should have some kind of activity every week; anyone with event planning background and ideas please reach out to him. Rawls also plans to address City cleanup efforts as well as energy efficiency and weatherization plans to save citizens money on utility bills. With the local shelter closing for the season, he would also like to address overnight emergency shelters and transportation programs. In addition, Rawls will be looking into traffic and parking issues Uptown, as well as speeding in residential streets, derelict vehicles, and parking on the wrong side of the road. Lawson said one of the Uptown businesses had reached out to Council and she would like that business owner to know that Council is addressing those concerns. Pearson added a follow-up related to Martinsville Bee City, the Garden Tour will take place on April 19; this is a fundraiser for Martinsville/Henry County beautification. The Historical Society opening scheduled for Friday night has been postponed due to the weather and will rescheduled for May 6. Mayor Jones shared that on April 15, there will be a basketball game at Martinsville Middle School between students and staff members. Jones offered prayers for our community and those around us that have been affected by recent violence. Jones touched on the Community Advisory Board, sharing that it still has vacancies and encouraged residents to apply.

Comments by City Manager – City Manager Towarnicki referenced the previous Bee City discussion, sharing that Ms. Edgerton had handed out clover seeds at the previous meeting which only grow about 8 inches high so it may be a good idea for inspections to reseed lots with clover so they won't have to mow so often. Congratulations to Sean Moore who is a former Martinsville High School graduate and stand-out athlete. Moore will be inducted into the 2023 Virginia Sports Hall of Fame Class on April 22. To be inducted is quite an honor. Moore was a high school star in the 1980s and carried his success through to college and was drafted into several NFL and Canadian football teams.

There being no further business, Council Member Lawson made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

LC Jones, Mayor