

City of
NORTON

NORTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2026

The Regular Council Meeting was called to order on Monday, January 5, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. by Donald Harbert, President of Council. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and the invocation was offered by Mr. DeHarpart.

Roll Call:	Jamie Lukens	Also Present:
	Paul Tousley	Mayor Zita
	Paul Eader (excused)	Michael Rorar
	Judith Lynn Lee	Pamela Keener
	William Mowery	Justin Markey
	Don Harbert	Kerry Macomber
	Doug DeHarpart	

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC - None

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION

Financial Reports - President Harbert acknowledged receipt of the December 2025 Financial Reports.

Finance - Fire Levy (Renewal) – Mr. Harbert explained this is a resolution to proceed with placing the Fire Levy on the ballot for the May 5, 2026 election stating there is no increase, as proposed in the November 2025 election. This renewal is the 5.6%. Mr. Markey clarified there will not be a change in the effective rate and it is just a renewal of the existing rate. Mr. Harbert moved to add Res. No. 1-2026 to tonight's Agenda for a first reading with intent to waive the third reading at the January 20, 2026 meeting due to a February deadline at the Board of Elections; seconded by Mr. Tousley.

Roll Call: Yes: Harbert, Tousley, Mowery
No: None

Motion passed unanimously.

Personnel & Rules - Zoning Administrator – Mr. Lukens explained this is an updated job description and salary range of \$87,000 - \$97,000 for the Zoning Administrator and asked what the current salary is for this position. Ms. Keener replied \$78,000. Mr. Harbert asked if the adjusted annual rate on January 1, 2026 will be \$83,000. Ms. Keener replied that it depends on if the new salary range is used to determine the adjusted annual rate. Mr. Tousley asked what determines where in the salary range of \$87,000 - \$97,000 the Zoning Administrator will fall. Ms. Keener said the Director of Personnel will determine that amount. Mr. Tousley said he would prefer that the Administrative Officer have more time in his new position before making such a decision. Mr. Lukens concurred saying this is almost

\$100,000 and it must be at the top of the City's salaries. Ms. Keener said it is at the bottom. Mr. Markey said the intention was to bring the Zoning Administrator's salary more in line with the other Department Heads. Mayor Zita concurred. Mr. Markey added that the Zoning Administrator brings a lot of value to the City and does a lot of uncompensated hard work for the good of the community. Mr. Mowery suggested this ordinance be moved to a first reading, which would show respect to this individual. Mr. Harbert concurred and said it would allow the Administrative Officer several weeks to get acclimated to his new position. Mr. Markey agreed and said that will also give them time to get the exact figures on the adjusted annual rate for 2026. Mr. DeHarpart also agreed with moving forward with the ordinance for a first reading while the new Administrator looks over everything. Mr. Lukens moved to add Ord. No. 2-2026 to tonight's Agenda for a first reading; seconded by Ms. Lee.

Roll Call: Yes: Lukens, Lee, Harbert
No: None

Motion passed unanimously.

Planning & Economic Development – Mr. DeHarpart explained this is a six-month extension to the moratorium on Adult-Use Cannabis Businesses and remarked that the state laws are still changing. He also noted that Council could lift this moratorium at any time. Mr. Lukens said that it has been two years since this was passed and asked if the state has given information on the oversight of these businesses. Mr. DeHarpart said it keeps evolving and changing and Mr. Markey has been waiting to get some grass roots examples from neighboring communities. Mr. Markey concurred stating they are okay with continuing with the six-month moratoriums. Mr. Harbert said that there has been about \$700 million in sales in the State of Ohio with a 10% excise tax plus sales tax making it about 17.5% in total taxes. In December, the State outlawed Hemp completely and reduced the allowable level of THC in recreational marijuana. There still hasn't been a decision made as to how the pay out of revenue will occur. Mr. DeHarpart moved to add Ord. No. 3-2026 to tonight's Agenda for a first reading with intent to waive third reading on January 20, 2026; seconded by Mr. Lukens.

Roll Call: Yes: DeHarpart, Lukens
No: None

Motion passed unanimously.

Service – Mr. Tousley explained this for the SR 261 Resurfacing Project, which has been discussed over the past year. This project costs several million dollars and Norton's share would be \$527,834 with ODOT grants providing for the remaining cost. Mr. Tousley asked about the section of the road that was skipped between Cleveland-Massillon and Silver Springs and Ms. Keener explained that is for the water line. She explained because the OPWC funding request for the water line was not approved, Administration will need to determine if that project will go forward. The Mayor explained it wouldn't be skipped entirely because it will be done at a later time. Mr. Tousley noted that because this is grant funded, we have to move quickly and moved to add Ord. No. 4-2026 to tonight's Agenda for a first reading with intent to waive third reading on January 20, 2026.

Roll Call: Yes: Tousley, DeHarpert

No: None

Motion passed unanimously.

MATTERS REFERRED – Mr. Harbert asked if there has been any developments on signage for the Veterans Memorial. Mr. Markey said that there is substantial vehicle count required for getting signage placed on SR 76. Mr. DeHarpert asked about the signage that lists the upcoming restaurants and asked if those are purchased by the restaurant. If so, could Norton pay to put up a sign. Mr. Markey explained those are for attractions and that is what Mr. Binsley inquired into and it was determined we don't have the necessary vehicle count to qualify. Mr. Lukens referenced the brown sign that reads Ohio Veterans Memorial and suggested putting a sign advertising the Norton Veterans Memorial under it or at the end of the SR 76 ramp.

Mr. Tousley noted that under the Personnel/Rules there was a request by a resident to develop a video explaining the flow of procedures for the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning & Building Appeals and Council as it pertains to proposed projects. Mr. Harbert asked Administration to follow up.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of Regular Council Meeting of December 15, 2025 were approved as submitted.

REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND OFFICERS

Mayor Zita congratulated the City Council Members that were sworn in tonight. He welcomed Mr. Rorar to the team. Mr. Rorar thanked all for the opportunity.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW LEGISLATION

Res. No. 1-2026

Mr. Harbert introduced Res. No. 1-2026 for its first reading and asked the Clerk to read:

A RESOLUTION DETERMINING TO PROCEED WITH THE SUBMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF THE RENEWAL OF A TAX LEVY IN EXCESS OF THE TEN-MILL LIMITATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING AND MAINTAINING FIRE APPARATUS, APPLIANCES, BUILDINGS AND SITES THEREFOR, SOURCES OF WATER SUPPLY AND MATERIALS THEREFOR, THE PAYMENT OF PERMANENT, PART-TIME OR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL TO OPERATE THE SAME, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF ANY EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FOR SUCH PERSONNEL UNDER SECTION 145.48 OR 742.34 OF THE REVISED CODE, AND THE PROVISION OF AMBULANCE, PARAMEDIC AND OTHER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES OPERATED BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 5705.19(I) OF THE REVISED CODE, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First reading tonight with intent to waive third reading at the January 20, 2026 meeting.

Ord. No. 2-2026

Mr. Lukens introduced Ord. No. 2-2026 for its first reading and asked the Clerk to read:

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AN AMENDED JOB DESCRIPTION AND DUTIES FOR THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR AND SALARY SCHEDULE FOR SUCH POSITION; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First reading only.

Ord. No. 3-2026

Mr. DeHarpert introduced Ord. No. 3-2026 for its first reading and asked the Clerk to read it:

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING A MORATORIUM ON APPLICATIONS FOR, AND THE GRANTING OF, ZONING CERTIFICATES FOR ANY BUILDING, STRUCTURE, USE OR CHANGE OF USE THAT WOULD ENABLE THE CULTIVATION, PROCESSING, DISTRIBUTION OR SALE OF ADULT USE CANNABIS FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED SIX MONTHS IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE CITY TO REVIEW APPLICABLE STATE AND LOCAL LAWS, TO PLAN FOR REGULATIONS RELATING TO SUCH USES; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First reading tonight with intent to waive third reading at the January 20, 2026 meeting.

Ord. No. 4-2026

Mr. Tousley introduced Ord. No. 4-2026 for its first reading and asked the Clerk to read it:

AN AGREEMENT WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REGARDING THE PROJECT DESIGNATED AS PID 113037 (SR 261 RESURFACING); AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First reading only.

INTRODUCTION OF PRIOR LEGISLATION

Ord. No. 119-2025

Ms. Lee offered Ord. No. 119-2025 for its second reading and asked the Clerk to read it:

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO AN AGREEMENT WITH NORTON ENERGY STORAGE LLC; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Second reading only.

Mr. Tousley asked for clarification and Mr. Markey explained the readings of this legislation continues unless it is tabled. Mr. Markey said that Administration would like Council to vote on this legislation and they would still like to get the extension from the company. The city has the right to get the property out of escrow, but they would like Council to vote on the extension because Administration believes it is best for the residents if the City does not take ownership of the mine. Norton does not legally own the mine right now. Mr. Tousley asked if the City could sit on this infinitely. Mr. Markey said basically, yes because the Title Company doesn't know to release it out of escrow until they are told to do so.

TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING – Tuesday, January 20, 2026

NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Lukens thanked Mr. DeHarpert and Mr. Harbert for their excellent work as President and Vice President. Mr. Lukens said he wants to start planning for the Veterans Memorial events for the upcoming year. Mr. DeHarpert said there could be events on both Memorial Day and on July 4th. Mr. Lukens concurred. Mayor Zita suggested establishing a Committee and Mr. Lukens volunteered to serve on an Events Committee.

Ms. Lee thanked everyone for participating in the Christmas in the Park and reminded the public that tomorrow is the deadline for taking down the decorations.

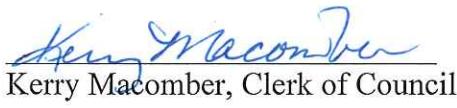
Mr. Harbert reminded everyone that cars need to stop for school buses as they load or unload children. He said that Chief McShane is aware of cars passing school buses and will be reviewing this area.

ADJOURN - There being no other business to come before the Regular Council Meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.



Donald Harbert, President of Council

I, Kerry Macomber, Clerk of Council for the City of Norton, do hereby certify that the foregoing minutes were approved at a Regular Council Meeting held on January 20, 2026.



Kerry Macomber, Clerk of Council

NOTE: These minutes are not verbatim

Original signed and approved minutes are on file with the Clerk of Council.

