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**Roanoke Rapids City Council**

**October 1, 2013**

The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on the above date at 5:15 p.m. in the first floor conference room of the J. Reuben Daniel City Hall & Police Station.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

Ernest C. Bobbitt)

Greg Lawson)

Suetta S. Scarbrough)

Carol H. Cowen)

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, City Clerk

Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney

Greg Lawson, Council Member

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with prayer.

Mayor Doughtie called Council’s attention to the Conflict of Interest statement in the agenda packet.

With no one indicating a conflict of interest with any of the items on the agenda, motion was made by ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by ­­­­­Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for October 1, 2013.

Police Chief Hathaway recognized the following recent promotions and new hires:

⮚Andy Jackson promoted to Uniform Patrol Division Captain

⮚Ozzie Morgan promoted to CID Captain

⮚Andy Bryant promoted to Administrative Lieutenant

⮚Patrick Smith hired as Police Officer

⮚Nolan Coles hired as Police Officer

⮚Courtney Williams hired as Police Officer

⮚New K-9 Unit: Po-Cock & Handler Sergeant Daniel Jenkins

Back & Handler Patrolman Gerald Morris

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked Chief Hathaway to share with everyone what these dogs cost the City and what it would have cost us.

Chief Hathaway stated we received these dogs free through a program with the Air Force. He stated had we purchased them, they would have been $15,000 apiece.

Mayor Doughtie asked about their areas of expertise.

Chief Hathaway stated explosives and tracking, and eventually narcotics.

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Ms. Leah Anderson Reed of 49 Longstreet Road, Weldon, NC thanked Council for allowing her to come back and address the issue of homeless women and children. She stated at the last meeting, she provided a brief overview of the “Room at the Inn” Program, and would like to provide more information. She stated the idea came from the Halifax County Housing Collaborative which meets once a month. She stated for the past two years, they have been talking about homeless women and children, and decided it was time to stop talking and do something about it. Ms. Reed stated the original plan was to set up in host churches beginning on November 4 and run through March 31. She stated the host churches would feed the homeless women and children breakfast and dinner. She indicated that they were told that they may be able to use the old Fire Station No. 2 building which would be more permanent and would eliminate the need to transport the women from the different churches. Ms. Reed stated she realizes that the building would not be ready by November 4 and they could go ahead and start the program in the churches.

Ms. Reed stated according to the last census, 24% of people in Halifax County live below the poverty level and 39% of children live in poverty. She stated we live in the fourth poorest Congressional District in the nation. She also indicated that according to the NC Coalition to End Homelessness, the estimate for homeless in our county, based on a point in time estimate, is 76. She pointed out that this estimate is calculated from the number known homeless in shelters, and as our community has only one small shelter serving men, these numbers greatly underestimate our homeless population. Ms. Reed stated if you spend just five minutes in the lobby of the Union Mission, you will see the need for a shelter for women and children.

Ms. Reed stated this program will give these women a “hand up” – not a “hand out”. She stated they want to help these women help themselves through the “Jobs for Life” program which they will be required to attend every morning. She stated the intake process will include a drug screening and a covenant agreement to the rules and regulations. Ms. Reed stated this is our County’s problem and she asked what we are going to do about it.

Mayor Doughtie stated during our last meeting, Council members had some questions. He asked Council if they had any additional questions for Ms. Reed.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the point in time count.

Ms. Reed stated 76.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if that number was just for Roanoke Rapids or the entire County.

Ms. Reed stated the County but the focus will be on citizens in Roanoke Rapids.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated to Ms. Reed that in her last presentation she indicated that the building was not currently being used full-time when in fact, it is. She stated two different entities use it.

Ms. Reed stated she was told that those groups could meet elsewhere. She stated as for the outside storage buildings, they would not need those.

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Councilwoman Scarbrough stated the actual building is being used for storage. She stated at the last meeting, she also mentioned that her group would be responsible for maintenance of the building. She asked if that would include bringing the building up to code.

Ms. Reed stated she met yesterday with the Planning & Development Department to get more information about the building. She stated once they have that information, they would come back to the City to negotiate.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated that she also mentioned another place they had in mind if our building is not viable.

Ms. Reed stated their first plan was to keep it in the churches and if the old fire station is not an option, they will continue with that plan.

Councilwoman Cowen asked Ms. Reed to explain a typical day for the homeless women that would be housed in the shelter.

Ms. Reed stated they would get up at 7:00 a.m. and have breakfast between 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. provided by a host church. She stated they would attend the “Jobs for Life” class at the CADA offices, and then they would be taken to the Union Mission where they would either volunteer there or at Angel’s Closet. Ms. Reed stated the only time they would be at the old fire station would be in the mornings and at nights. She explained that when they return, they would be given a drug test and breathalyzer. She assured Council that these women would not be hanging out at the building.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if there will be a staff member at the building at night.

Ms. Reed stated yes.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if they would be free to leave the building in the evening.

Ms. Reed stated yes. She stated during the intake process they would develop goals such as getting their GED or attending college, and they would be transported to the Community College. She pointed out that the women would be responsible for their children.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the 15 supporting churches have guaranteed an amount to be given to the program.

Ms. Reed explained that when she said they supported the program she did not necessarily mean that they would support them financially. She stated the original plan was to function at zero but they now have a budget and do not know how much to ask for.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated at the last meeting she mentioned that they would become self-supporting and may even purchase the building.

Ms. Reed stated yes, they are interested in a two year lease with an option to purchase. She stated she checked and the assessed value of the building is $176,000.

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Mayor Doughtie applauded Ms. Reed for her efforts. He stated he does not know how this will end but this City Council represents all citizens. He stated he does not know if staff has any information on changing the use of the property and the cost for upgrading the building but he is pleased to hear that she is moving forward with the project.

City Manager Scherer indicated that staff does have information ready to present.

Planning & Development Director Lasky reviewed the following information that was presented as a PowerPoint presentation:

**OLD FIRE STATION NO. 2**

**1620 S. HAMILTON STREET**

**Property Overview**

* Existing Use: **Fire Department training & meeting facility, ancillary storage**
* Zoning Classification: **R-6 Residential District**
* Occupancy Classification: **Group B (Business)**

**Property Existing Conditions/Needs**

Preliminary List of Building Needs as Observed by City Staff:

* Roof Replacement
* Plumbing/Drainage Issues
* Heating & Air Conditioning Upgrade
* Electrical System Evaluation/Upgrade
* Inadequate Handicap Accessibility

**Proposed Change of Use**

* Proposed Use: **Shelter for Women/Children**
* Zoning Land Use Classification: **“Shelter” is not specifically listed in Table of Permissible Uses.**
* Occupancy Classification: **Group Residential**

**Considerations**

* Zoning

⮚ A multi-family residence is not a permitted use in the R-6 District. Multi-family is permitted in R-3, B-1 and B-3 Districts.

⮚ Special Care Homes (Nursing, Family, Foster as defined by the State) are permitted in R-8, R-6, R-5 R-3, and B-3 Districts with a Conditional Use Permit obtained from City Council.

⮚ Shelters for humans *(not animals)* needs to be classified by the City’s Land Use Ordinance.

* Building Code Occupancy Classifications

⮚ Proposed Shelter occupancy is defined as a “Change of Use” from business to residential.

⮚ 2012 North Carolina State Building Codes address requirements for occupancy changes:

♦Handicap Accessibility (bathrooms, showers, doorways)

♦Energy Code Compliance (lighting, heating, cooling)

♦Fire Protection by Sprinkler System, Fire Alarm

⮚ A licensed North Carolina Professional Engineer or Architect’s evaluation of the building may result in some exceptions from requirements of the 2012 NC Building Codes. The following codes could be considered in lieu of 2012 versions:

♦2009 Building Rehabilitation Code

♦Existing Building Code

⮚ **Exceptions may not preclude requirements for fire protection in sleeping rooms.**

**Examples of Probable Costs**

* **Sprinkler System and Fire Alarm System for Halifax County EMS at 220 Smith Church Road (2012-2013), 4,500 square feet.**

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|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Tasks** | **Actual Costs** |
| Building Evaluation by Professional Engineer | $ 6,000 |
| Sprinkler System Water Tap (including equipment, labor) | $16,000 |
| Automatic Fire Sprinkler System | $16,000 (negotiated down from $26,000) |
| Monitored Fire Alarm System | $10,000 |
| **Negotiated FINAL TOTAL** | **$48,000** |

\*Figures from Halifax County for project at 220 Smith Church Road. Initial price quotes are not included.

**Preliminary Opinions of Costs for Proposed Change of Use to Shelter**

*Proposed Shelter at 1620 S. Hamilton Street, 3,600 square feet*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Probable Projected Tasks** | **Estimated Cost Opinion\*\*** |
| Professional Evaluation, Fire Protection System | $48,000\* |
| HVAC System Upgrades (per existing building layout) | $ 6,000 |
| Electrical System Inspection & Upgrades | $ 2,000 |
| Handicap Accessibility (ADA) | Undetermined |
| Roof Repair/Replacement | $25,000 - $35,000 |
| **Estimated Range** | **$81,000+** |

\*Figure from Halifax County for project at 220 Smith Church Road.

\*\*Opinions of costs provided by City staff, these are rough estimates and should not be considered final.

Councilman Bobbitt stated if the old truck bay was divided into rooms, it would require more HVAC duct work.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated that is correct.

Mayor Doughtie stated this gives everyone some idea of what it would take to change the use of the building. He asked how the Council would like to proceed.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated we have had two weeks to think about this and she has done a lot of research on the internet. She stated she feels she knows as much as she needs to know.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he does not know if the requestor has had an opportunity to consider this information. He stated he would like to table this matter. He stated it sounds like some big costs.

Mayor Doughtie stated we are now meeting on our new schedule so we will meet again in two weeks.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee to table this matter until the next meeting.

There being no second to the motion, Mayor Doughtie announced that the motion died for lack of a second.

Councilman Bobbitt stated he and Councilwoman Scarbrough have reviewed and thought a lot about this matter. He stated we have the costs of what it will take to change the use of the building. Councilman Bobbitt stated this building is owned by the City and the taxpayers. He stated we may be able to open the building back up and we need to retain possession of the property.

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Motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt to retain possession of the old Fire Station No. 2, and not lease or rent the property at this time.

Mayor Doughtie stated more individuals have signed up for “unscheduled public comment” and they may be here to speak on this matter. He asked City Attorney Chichester if it would be permissible to let those individuals speak before continuing with consideration of the motion on the floor.

City Attorney Chichester stated it would be permissible to let them speak before calling for a second to the motion.

Ms. Carolyn Ross-Holmes of 2130 Eaton Ferry Road, Littleton, NC stated she is one of the founding Board Members of Angel’s Closet. She stated Gilbert Portela, Director of Angel’s Closet, was unable to be here tonight but asked that she express his complete support of this group. She indicated that so far this year, Angel’s Closet has assisted 8 to 10 single mothers and their children. Ms. Ross-Holmes indicated that Angel’s Closet would be willing to provide furniture, linens, curtains and any other supplies needed. She stated Mr. Portela is willing to speak with individual Council members if necessary.

Reverend LaCount Anderson, Director of the Union Mission, stated it has been a privilege to be here since 2009. He stated he has become very involved in the plight of the homeless and those in poverty. He stated the Union Mission lends its support for this program. Reverend Anderson stated he has been involved in the Halifax County Housing Collaborative, and the City Manager has attended at least one meeting. He stated we have a problem in this town. He stated a $39 hotel room is a waste of money and a lot of $39 has been spent by different churches. Reverend Anderson stated whether or not this shelter is located at the old fire station, he would ask that the Council join the people of God in this town that are trying to do something about this problem.

Ms. Shannon Smiley, Executive Director of the John 3:16 Center, stated she grew up in Roanoke Rapids and moved back after college. She stated she has been working in the community for the last nine years. She stated she was amazed to find out how many families are in need, and there is a perception that these people are addicts or alcoholics. She stated that is not the case. She stated some people, even City employees, are just one paycheck away from being on the streets. Ms. Smiley stated people can quickly fall behind on payments. She stated they would like the ability to continue at the old fire station or any other building Council could suggest. She stated women and children need a place to stay. She stated these costs seem high but there are very generous people in this community, and we believe we can find ways to bring these costs down. Ms. Smiley stated they

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chose Roanoke Rapids because it would provide the best access to the resources needed.

Mr. Joel Rice, Chairman of the Halifax County Housing Collaborative, stated homelessness touches all of our lives, and as a community, we need to attack this together. He stated whatever way the City Council votes, at least we are talking about this problem. Mr. Rice stated we can do this as a community by working together.

Mr. Gerald McDaniel of 701 Carolina Street, Roanoke Rapids, NC stated before throwing $300,000 at this building, the group could construct a new building. He stated they have the right idea but they are trying to make the wrong building fit.

Mayor Doughtie asked Councilman Bobbitt to restate his motion.

Motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt to retain possession of the old Fire Station No. 2, and not lease or rent the property at this time.

Councilwoman Scarbrough seconded the motion.

Upon being put to a vote, Councilman Bobbitt, Councilwoman Scarbrough and Councilwoman Cowen voted in favor of the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee voted against the motion.

Mayor Doughtie declared the motion carried by a 3 to 1 vote.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he agrees with the gentleman that just spoke. He stated he wanted to table this matter so the group could consider trying something different.

Councilman Bobbitt stated his vote is not against the shelter. He stated he has done a lot of research and does not believe the old fire station is the right building. He stated it will cost a lot to upgrade, and there is bound to be other vacant properties even on Roanoke Avenue that would work. Councilman Bobbitt stated he hopes this program is a success.

Mayor Doughtie stated no one on this Council is against what this group is trying to do. He encouraged the City Council and the community to support this group’s efforts.

Motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to approve the September 3, 2013 and September 17, 2013 Council Minutes.

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Public Works Director Chalker stated Council members have before them a request for consideration of amendments to the City Council Policy on Rochelle Pond Management. He stated in the past, the Parks & Recreation Department has been responsible for Rochelle Pond yet the Public Works Department was doing a lot of the work. He stated City Manager Scherer met with him and Parks & Recreation Director Simeon, and they all felt it would be more appropriate for the Public Works Department to be responsible for the pond. Public Works Director Chalker also stated that when this policy was initially adopted in 2001, it was based on an agreement with residents surrounding the pond. He stated some have moved away so the agreement really did not have any substance. He stated this revised policy clarifies some wording in the original policy.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve amendments to the City Council Policy on Rochelle Pond Management to read as follows:

***City of Roanoke Rapids***

***City Council Policy – Rochelle Pond Management***

Rochelle Pond is a small, publicly owned body of water surrounded by private property. Private property is immediately adjacent to the pond with the exception of a public street access along a portion of the pond, and where bordered by the dam and canal trail. The pond historically has been privately owned, but was accepted for ownership by the City of Roanoke Rapids in 1995. The pond serves as a major stormwater retention basin for the northwestern part of the City. It has traditionally provided passive recreational enjoyment for adjoining property owners and occasional citizens.

The City and property owners have always worked collaboratively in the oversight of the pond. Both the City and the neighbors feel it important to implement rules to provide for public safety, use and maintenance surrounding the pond.

Based on public neighborhood input, the following management plan has been developed by City Council with input from the neighbors.

**Pond Maintenance Responsibilities**

* Residents are encouraged to assist in collecting and disposing of trash and debris along the border of their properties.
* The City agrees to collect and dispose of larger items in and around the pond on an as-needed basis. Residents agree to contact the Public Works Director as necessary. The Public Works Department will provide a boat to access and remove large items in the pond if needed.
* At the Public Works Director’s discretion, the City may choose to drain a portion of the pond to allow for a more thorough clean-up along the shore line. Should this happen, adjoining owners are encouraged to assist in cleaning the areas bordering their property. The City agrees to clean the areas bordering public access.
* The City will perform maintenance on the dam as needed.
* Other maintenance concerns will be addressed as needed; coordinated through the City’s Public Works Director. Residents are encouraged to report maintenance concerns to the Roanoke Rapids Public Works Department.

**Rochelle Pond Rules and Regulations**

City Council shall keep in force a City ordinance governing rules and regulations for the pond. This ordinance will include provisions as follows, and as amended from time to time as necessary for effective governance of the pond.

* The hours of operation of the Rochelle Pond shall be from sunrise to sunset.
* No parking is allowed on Harvey Circle right-of-way after sunset.
* No wading or swimming is allowed in the pond.

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* Fishing shall be catch and release only.
* Disruptive conduct is not allowed.
* Motorized boats are prohibited from being on the pond. (No electric, gas or trolling motors.) The Roanoke Rapids Public Works Department may authorize the use of a motorized craft only when used in performing maintenance.
* Littering is prohibited.
* Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs are prohibited.
* Use of the pond is at one’s own risk. The City assumes no responsibility for accidents or injuries.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

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Mayor City Clerk

City Manager Scherer reported that we recently had short notice of the deadline for submitting applications to the County for funding from the Golden LEAF Foundation. He stated certain parameters were set for the grant which required projects to be somewhat shovel ready. City Manager Scherer stated we submitted our request today for $480,000 for stormwater infrastructure repairs/upgrade. He explained that the County Management Team will review all applications and make a recommendation to the County Commissioners.

City Manager Scherer reported that unfortunately, our City, like many other cities, is seeing an increase in heroin use. He stated for a long time, crack has been the primary drug of choice but heroin is starting to creep into the City. He stated this contributes to problems of theft and violence. City Manager Scherer stated we are working with other agencies on this problem.

City Manager Scherer reported that the Commerce Secretary will be in town on October 9 for a meeting with him, Cathy Scott and several others. He stated Ms. Scott will have some issues ready to discuss, and we plan to do a tour of the City and highlight the Theatre district, the WestPoint Stevens Mill property and the business district.

City Manager Scherer reminded Council that he and Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee will be attending the NC League of Municipalities Annual Conference from October 12 to October 15.

City Manager Scherer reported that the Parks & Recreation Department will again be in charge of the Christmas Parade. He stated the website is up and running.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adjourn.

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10/15/13