



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on Tuesday, October 4, 2016 at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem
Ernest C. Bobbitt)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Carol H. Cowen)
Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director
Chuck Hasty, Police Chief
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director

Council Members

Absent: Wayne Smith, Council Member

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

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members about any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening.

There being no conflicts, motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for October 4, 2016.

Special Recognitions

Police Department Recognitions

Chief Hasty recognized Police Officers Alex Green, Jeffery Mason and Lt. Jeff Baggett for going above and beyond the call of duty. He stated on September 8, 2016, the officers responded to a call where they found a person unresponsive. He said the officers administered narcan and brought the individual back to life. He added this was the first successful use of narcan by his officers. He presented each of them with a life-saving award certificate and pin.

Chief Hasty recognized Police Officer Chris Biggerstaff and citizen Donald Tart, Jr. for going above and beyond the call of duty. He reported on September 22, 2016, there was a motor vehicle accident at approximately 3 a.m. and Mr. Tart saw the accident and called it in. He said soon after Officer Biggerstaff arrived on scene the vehicle caught on fire. He said not thinking about themselves, they went down into the ravine and pulled the woman out of the vehicle. He presented each of them with a life-saving award certificate and pin.

Chief Hasty recognized Police Officer Chris Biggerstaff for Officer of the Quarter (July-September 2016).

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Mr. Gerald McDaniel

Mr. Gerald McDaniel of 713 Monroe Street stated he wanted to first apologize to Attorney Chichester in case he embarrassed him a while back about the cell tower thing. He said when he walked in the door, the first thing he saw was a pair of snake skin boots, nice suit, starched shirt and his first thought was slick was in the building. He stated he felt like he was fair game as far as he was concerned. He said when they started piling on about the driveway and the grass that was when he brought up the cinderblock thing. He said he noticed when some of them were talking, he would write about three letters down and then somebody else would say something and he would write three more letters on top of that, like he was taking notes. He said he was a US Cellular customer so he may have done himself in.

He said a while back they said solar power in North Carolina had peaked and he was thinking we were going to get a new factory.

He said he read all the good things about that in the Herald and then he read this in the *News & Observer*. He read excerpts from the article:

Some utility substations can't accommodate more solar farms without costly upgrades; NC's 35% renewable tax credit, which had been funding the upgrades, expired last year; solar prices are so low that Duke Energy no longer subsidizes some farms in NC.

North Carolina may be nearing a renewable energy tipping point that could well be dubbed peak solar. But North Carolina's frenetic rate of solar energy buildout can't go on forever, and solar developers and experts say they're beginning to see early signs that solar power development may be peaking in North Carolina.

Duke Energy says that some of its rural substations are reaching maximum load. The executive director of the N.C. Clean Energy Technology Center, predicted that the resulting grid interconnection logjam, and a shortage of available land near remaining substations, will crimp solar farm development within three to five years.

He stated it seems like if the County was going to get this, we were about ten years late on this solar panel deal. He said these panels may be toxic, we may be building in NC and hoping someone outside of NC would need them. He said he thinks this business has gone back to China. He stated even Donald Trump said he has lost millions on solar panels. He said he understands the solar panel factory is on hold and hopes it dead and stays dead.

Mayor Doughtie thanked Mr. McDaniel for coming and stated to answer his questions about it, the company was looking at coming to the corporate industrial park in the County. He said they were working with Halifax County on it so the City was not involved in that project.

<p style="text-align: center;">Approval of Council Minutes</p>

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to approve the September 18, 2016 Regular Meeting Council Minutes.

New Business

Presentation of FY 2015-2016 Annual Report of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Ms. Lori Medlin, President and CEO of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau presented the FY 2015-2016 report and played a short video giving an overview on why tourism is important for North Carolina and Roanoke Rapids.

Ms. Medlin began her report by reminding the Council of their mission statement which was simply to “promote the growth of tourism in Halifax County.” She said that no local tax dollars are used in this effort; they are totally funded by the occupancy tax dollars visitors leave in our county. She said the more visitors we bring in the more money we have to bring more visitors in; it’s a great system.

Ms. Medlin highlighted the following items from her report:

- Visitors spent \$89.72 million in Halifax County in 2015; a 2.3% growth.
- Spending by travelers directly and indirectly supported over 1,000 jobs.
- Visitors spending saves Halifax County tax payers \$147.55 per year.
- Partnerships with attractions, lodging and dining remain key to success in tourism in Halifax County.
- Occupancy taxes are an important indicator of success and in 2015-2016 collections grew 6.99% which was a record.
- Lodging revenues reached a high of \$16,961,608.
- VisitHalifax.com reached record levels for traffic and engagement. Sessions were up by 19.9%. Page views by users were up 22.58% and average length of time a visitor stayed on the site was up 19.77%.
- Social media is the key to marketing tourism. *Facebook* impressions were up 233%, *Twitter* up 134% and follower increased 321% on *Instagram*.
- They partner with not only the Roanoke Rapids Parks & Recreation, but also NC DOT, NC Department of Cultural Resources, NC State Parks, Kate B. Reynolds and NC Wildlife Resources.

Ms. Medlin summarized the following initiatives:

- 301 Endless Yard Sale held each June.
- Launched Wedding Planners Portal.

- Launched Walking in the Footsteps of Freedom Tour.
- Discover Halifax County Blog.
- Installed three (3) new Electric Car Charging Stations.
- Managed Canal Trail Enhancement Project and Bike Lending Program.
- Sponsored acquisition of Historic Halifax period clothing.
- Completed the Ledgerwood Field Enhancement Project.
- Billboard campaigns.
- Subsidize coupon books for travelers.
- Ad campaigns in magazines through co-op programs.
- Satellite visitor centers.
- Sponsorship of area festivals.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Ms. Medlin if there was one particular attraction that helped visitors stay the 19.77% longer. Mrs. Medlin replied that the 19.77% was visitors staying longer on the website site, but the average length of stay in the area was less than 2 days and they were trying very hard to extend that. She stated the most visited attraction in Halifax County was Medoc Mountain followed by Sylvan Heights, Canal Trail Museum and then Historic Halifax.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Ms. Medlin about the occupancy tax rates compared with others in the region. Ms. Medlin replied it was a little higher than the State but runs about the same as other communities along I-95. She stated Exit 173 was a very healthy exit.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was anything the City could do the help that arena. She replied they needed some new signage at exit 171 and may need some easements for the signage. She said the City did a great job with Parks & Recreation, maintaining the vegetation at the interchange and the Canal Trail and do anything they ask of them, but she would let them know if she thought of anything.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon and Ms. Medlin if there was anything coming up in 2017. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied they had some ideas, but nothing they should speak about at this point.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Ms. Medlin if she had seen much activity at the electric car charging stations. Ms. Medlin replied she believed they were averaging about 30-40 charges a month at the three stations. She said the one at their office was used quite often and surprising they were used more than she thought they would be.

Mayor Doughtie asked Ms. Medlin what the occupancy rate was for the hotels in Roanoke Rapids, not the rate, but how full they were. Ms. Medlin said it averaged around 70% year round. She reported that it is about 100% during the summer months and December around the holidays, but down the other times of the year. She said the area could probably use more rooms and they were looking at a site for future development in the next year.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the percentage amount added to the room for occupancy tax. Ms. Medlin said it was an additional 5% for the County and an additional 1% for Roanoke Rapids; so if you are checking out in Roanoke Rapids it would be 6% but elsewhere in the County it was 5%.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee commented that was pretty good in comparison to other areas. Ms. Medlin said that the maximum was 6% in North Carolina without a special exception from the NC Tourism Coalition; you can only go over 6% if you have a specific thing you want to build and get a special approval to do that. She added that outside of NC and in larger cities, it was a lot more than that. She said people were used to paying at least 6% if not more.

Designation of Voting Delegate for the 2016 Annual League Business Meeting

City Manager Scherer reported each year, representatives from the City attend the Annual Conference of the North Carolina League of Municipalities. He said this year, Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee will be attending the conference in Raleigh October 23-25, 2016. The Annual League Business meeting will be held during the conference and a voting delegate needs to be designated by Council.

He asked Council for a motion to approve Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee to be the voting delegate for the 2016 Annual League Business Meeting.

Motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Councilwoman Cowen and unanimously carried to designate Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee as the City's Voting Delegate for the 2016 Annual League Business meeting.

Consideration of Ordinance Declaring a Road Closure for the Christmas Parade

Police Chief Hasty stated in light of recent changes by NCDOT regarding closures of state roads for special events, it is necessary to adopt an ordinance in order to close Roanoke Avenue (NC 48) for the Roanoke Rapids Christmas Parade on December 4, 2016. He stated an ordinance has been prepared for Council's

consideration which will be provided to NCDOT prior to the event.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the following ordinance:

ORDINANCE NO. 2016.16

**AN ORDINANCE DECLARING A ROAD CLOSURE FOR A CHRISTMAS
PARADE**

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges a long tradition of providing an annual Christmas parade for the pleasure of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges its citizens realize a financial benefit from holding an annual Christmas parade; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges a parade requires approximately two (2) hours to install signing and traffic control, and also requires approximately two (2) hours for removing signs, traffic control and litter;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids pursuant to the authority granted by G.S. 20-169 that they do hereby declare a temporary road closure during the day(s) and times set forth below on the following described portion of a State Highway System route:

Date(s):	Sunday, December 4, 2016
Times:	1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Route Description:	Roanoke Avenue (NC 48) between 14 th Street and 1 st Street

This ordinance to become effective when signs are erected giving notice of the limits and times of the parade, and implementation of adequate traffic control to guide through vehicles around the parade route.

ADOPTED this 4th day of October, 2016.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer reported all departments are preparing to respond to any effects from Hurricane Matthew this weekend. He said Governor McCrory has declared a state of emergency for the eastern part of the state. He stated we will coordinate with the County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) as we get closer to the weekend for response plans. He said we are concerned for trees being downed by the wind with the ground saturated from recent rains. He said Dominion NC Power is planning to stage their response vehicles at the Theatre parking lot as they have done in the past.

He said the Police Department continues to investigate the shooting incident at MIR's Sports Bar and Grill over the weekend. He stated fortunately, the bar owners have voluntarily surrendered their alcohol license. He said Chief Hasty and department members recently attended conferences around the State to discuss ways to better outreach our communities of color. He announced Chief Hasty has set the hours for Trick or Treat on Monday, October 31st to be from 5:30-8:00 p.m. and the Police Department is also hosting a Trunk or Treat at Doyle Field that same evening with other departments planning to have vehicles with treats there. He stated the Police Department is in the process of outfitting its new command vehicle which was donated by Dominion NC Power.

City Manager Scherer said the State has instituted a program where Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) who receive food assistance will be required to find some form of work and attend continuing education classes, to continue to be eligible for benefits. He stated they are required to be employed a minimum of 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month. He said we are looking at utilizing some of these people to help departments with city area and facilities cleanup, routine administrative tasks and other tasks they are capable of. He stated it does not cost the City anything to participate in this program.

He reported the Fire Department is conducting numerous activities at both their stations and local schools this month as part of National Fire Safety Month. He said the department's new air packs should be in later this month; a few of the masks will have thermal imaging cameras for the firefighters to be able to see through smoke and darkness.

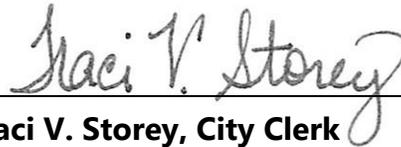
He stated City employees will be receiving their flu shot next Wednesday at City Hall.

City Manager Scherer announced the *Nitty Gritty Dirt Band* concert for this Saturday is being rescheduled for next spring. He said there will be a Business After Hours event at the Canal Museum on Thursday, October 13th beginning at 5:30 p.m.

He said the Roanoke Rapids Main Street program notes that Tillery's Design business is holding a Retirement Sale and continues to look for a buyer for their building. He reported Ms. Caudle and Ms. Lasky are working with the Patterson Mansion property owners to help market the property for sale. He said they have coordinated to have representatives from the State Historic Preservation office visit the mansion later this month.

Other Business/Comments by Council Members

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



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: October 18, 2016