



# **Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council**

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 6:00 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)  
Wayne Smith)

## **Council Members**

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager  
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney  
Traci Storey, City Clerk  
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director  
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager \*  
Bobby Martin, Police Chief  
Kelly Traynham, Planning & Development Director  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

**Absent:** Sandra W. Bryant, Council Member

*\*Denotes those joining remotely using Zoom.*

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order.

## **Committee Appointments/Reappointments 2021**

City Clerk Storey presented a list of committee members with upcoming expired terms and committee vacancies. She stated each year City Council is tasked with appointing or reappointing citizens to our Advisory Committees and Boards. She reported she has confirmations from Lori Medlin and Greg Lawson for the Canal Museum Advisory Committee. They are both willing to serve another term. She has confirmations from Sandra Duncan, Krystal Cook-Elliott and Brian Jones to serve another term on the Library Advisory Committee. She said Greg Browning as an ETJ member on the Planning Board/Board of Adjustment was reappointed by the Halifax County Board of Commissioners and Ginny Lewis was appointed by the County Commissioners to serve as an ETJ member as well. Carrie Tuning and Henry Ford are also willing to

serve again on the Planning Board. She is still waiting to hear from Lawrence White. She called their attention to two vacancies on the board for an ETJ member and an in-town member. She asked for suggestions or recommendations from the City Council or if anyone listening in the public was interested in serving to please contact her. There are also vacancies on the Beautification Committee so let her know if they have any recommendations for candidates to fill these positions.

She stated she was not asking for City Council to take any action tonight, but will bring the reappointments for the Canal Museum Advisory Committee, Library Advisory Committee and Planning Board to the June 15<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting for their approval.

Councilman Smith asked if Greg Browning was on the County Planning Board. City Clerk Storey replied no, he is an ETJ member on the board which means he lives outside the city limits. The same goes for Ginny Lewis. The Halifax County Board of Commissioners make those appointments.

Mayor Doughtie said they needed to get some people to fill the three vacancies on the Beautification Committee. City Clerk Storey said she receives calls from time to time from people who have moved into town and want to get involved. She also advertises vacancies on the City's website, in the City Page that runs in the Daily Herald and they are posted in City Hall.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if each of the City Council members was a liaison on some committee. City Clerk Storey replied yes.

Councilman Smith said they needed to do something to get the vacancies filled on the Planning Board because that was a very vital part of the City. City Clerk Storey agreed and stated the ETJ members are the most difficult to find. They did have an in-town member recently resign.

Planning & Development Director Traynham added the Planning Board was a nine-member board and they have alternates so they do have a full board. City Clerk Storey relayed that they are able to have a quorum. Some of the members serve as alternates so they are able to hold meetings, but it is good to have more alternates to choose from.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked City Clerk Storey to give City Council the entire list of members who serve on these committees/boards next time, not just the members who need to be reappointed and vacancies. This would give them an indication of how many people are on the committee because it does not look like there are just a few

people on the committee. She replied she would and said she usually includes the list of the entire committee when she brings appointments/reappointments to them. This list was to let them know the upcoming reappointments. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said it could just be the number of people that are on the committee.

### **Land Use Ordinance Text Amendments Mandated by NCGS 160D**

Planning & Development Director Traynham highlighted one particular area of the Land Use Ordinance amendments mandated by NCGS 160D. With Chapter 160D there are three ways the State allows for zoning decisions to be made. Conditional Zoning which has been around for a little while, but the City does not have it in place although some larger municipalities do have it. They are probably familiar with the conditional use and special use permit process, but now there will be only special use permits under 160D. That is the procedure where there is no ex-parte communication allowed, they listen to sworn testimony at the hearing and bound by information presented. If the applicant provides/meets all the information necessary for a complete application, the Council has to approve it. Those hearings and procedures can be very legalistic and challenging. The third method is called Conditional Use District Zoning and is something the City has been doing in the past.

She said Conditional Use District Zoning has been eliminated as an option by the legislature. It has been replaced with the term Conditional Zoning. It is not a new concept but will be new to the City of Roanoke Rapids and the procedures of it. An example was the Cross Creek community with the request for the apartment development and change in zoning. They would go through a conditional use permit hearing but would have a rezoning first and then the conditional use quasi-judicial process. The Conditional Zoning is effective in many ways. If there were to be any major modifications to the Cross Creek community, it would have to go through the conditional zoning process. The process for conditional zoning is a legislative process which allows talking outside of the meeting and gathering opinions. She added that as confusing as Chapter 160D may be, it does effectively streamline and reduce confusion with terminology and simplifies some of the processes.

Planning & Development Director Traynham stated when they typically have a rezoning request, for example, the State Employees Credit Union at the corner of Jefferson Street and E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street. When they applied the property was zoned residential. Since banks are not allowed in a residential district, she and the applicant discussed the districts that would allow it. They asked for a B-4 classification and during the rezoning hearing some of the affected neighbors were complaining about the potential uses. When looking at a rezoning in the general format, they have to consider all the permissible uses in that district, not just that one. Based on the comments that night, City Council ended up approving a B-2 zoning classification for

that site so the bank was able to be built.

She said Conditional Zoning would apply to developers who already know what they want to use the site for. Using the Credit Union as an example again, if they know they want to build a bank and already had a schematic site plan in mind, they could apply for a Conditional Zoning. They would apply for a B-4 Commercial District through Conditional Zoning. In the initial application they would demonstrate how they could meet all the standards of the ordinance upfront. The conversations during those hearings would be about the specific development. As a result of the decisions during the hearing and for the final approval, the specific development conditions would be part of the zoning district classification. It does require that the landowner, as the applicant sign and the mayor would sign to reflect all the conditions that were agreed upon during the meeting. Once all parties have signed it, there is a two year window of opportunity. If something were to happen outside that two year period and someone else wants to do something with the property or the circumstances change, they can bring it back to City Council under the approval process and revert it back to the original zoning classification. It will have a specific expiration date on the Conditional Zoning. The ordinances do provide for some optional extensions and criteria. Another year could be granted so they would bring that to City Council for their approval. The two years is considered fair for someone that is motivated to build. City Council could be more restrictive or less restrictive on certain requirements such as landscaping and parking. Conditional Zoning applications would be heard by the Planning Board and a recommendation would be provided from the Board and staff. She assured City Council if they have one of these she will brief them on the process. These types of zonings are flexible and stable and shows the landowners vested interest. It is very common. One of the downsides is that it requires staff maintenance upkeep of the zoning conditions of each conditional district.

Planning & Development Director Traynham explained she wanted to highlight Conditional Zoning because it will be a procedural change that will come up eventually.

### **Roof Repair/Replacement at Old Fire Station No. 2**

City Manager Scherer said City Council asked him to look at what it would take to repair the leaking roof at old Fire Station No. 2 and what it would cost to put on a new A-frame roof as opposed to the flat roof it has now.

He said they received an estimate from a local contractor for approximately \$20,000 to repair the roof. The Deputy Fire Chief who is a licensed contractor came up with a materials estimate to put on an A-frame roof on the fire station. He estimated it would

cost almost \$39,000 just for materials, not including labor to install it.

He reported the current property assessment by Halifax County is \$143,900. The issue is whether or not to do a roof repair or replacement in order to improve the building enough to generate interest in purchasing the building by private interests. If City Council wants to move forward with one of these projects, the funds would be taken from the Undesignated Fund, as the current budget or next year's budget does not have the funding. It would require a budget ordinance amendment to do so.

City Manager Scherer asked City Council what they would like to do with the old Fire Station No. 2 roof and how to proceed.

Councilman Smith asked how bad was the roof leaking now. Public Works Director Chalker replied a leak will only get worse so the leak has increased in volume. There is a tremendous amount of moisture in what used to be the sleeping quarters of the building. It is also leaking in the bays more than it has in the past.

Councilman Smith asked if the building was more valuable to the City than trying to sell it because he did not believe they would get \$144,000 for it; they probably would not get \$50,000 for it.

City Manager Scherer agreed with that estimate and believes it would be more beneficial to the City. It would give them a place to house the new Fire Safety House because it is taking up space in one of the fire bays where they need to park trucks. It is needed by the Police Department to store seized vehicles and equipment until the disposition is received. They can utilize the outside storage buildings for bicycles and other equipment as well. He thinks it is in the City's best interest to keep the building and if they can afford it, fix the roof and continue to use the building long term.

Fire Chief Patrick reminded City Council in next year's budget, he requested somewhere to store the new Fire Safety House. They need to keep it out of the weather. There were a few minor things they would have to do. They have taken the Fire Safety House over to the old station to see if it would fit. The biggest obstacle is the A/C units on top of the Fire Safety House is hitting the top of the door. They talked to Pantego about raising the door and it appears they would be able to do that.

Councilman Smith asked how much would that cost. Chief Patrick replied it would cost less than \$1,000 to raise the door and maybe move the motor to the side to give enough clearance.

Mayor Doughtie asked why they only obtained one estimate on the rubber roof. City

Manager Scherer replied that was by his direction to just get an idea of the general costs. If City Council wants to proceed with that, they would obtain other estimates to bring back to them.

Councilman Smith stated if the building was that much value to the City, they should get at least three estimates to repair the rubber roof. They tried to sell it and didn't get a bid at all.

City Manager Scherer said they would get the estimates and come back to City Council with a recommendation. Councilman Smith asked him to also tell them where the money will come from to fix the roof.

### **COPS Grant Overview**

Police Chief Martin gave an overview of the 2021 COPS grant. He said this grant, if awarded, can be used to hire new officers, which includes filling existing officer vacancies that are no longer funded in the budget. These positions must be in addition to the City's current budgeted (funded) level of sworn officer positions and the officers must be hired on or after the official award start date on the notice of award.

He reported the grant will cover up to 75% of the entry level salary and fringe benefits for each approved position for a three (3) year period based on the applicant's current entry level salary levels for full-time officers. There is a minimum 25% local cash match (cost share) requirement, unless a waiver is approved. The maximum federal share per officer position is \$125,000 over the three-year period.

He said this grant focuses on community policing as one of the concepts behind it. The PACE Team's job is to go out into the community and schools to talk about drugs and try to reach the kids and the neighborhoods. They would use this to fund the position that has been frozen for the past 1-1/2 years due to budget restraints. This is a competitive, discretionary program that has a limit of 200 anticipated awards nationwide. He hoped they would get the support of City Council to move forward with this.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked what was the entry level salary. Chief Martin replied \$35,000.

City Council agreed for Chief Martin to move forward with applying for the grant.

### **Miscellaneous**

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

Ms. Etheridge and I have participated in a few webinars about the American Rescue

Plan funding but haven't seen any new specific guidance on how the funds can be spent. The NCLM seems to think that road maintenance and repairs can be included in the infrastructure part of the plan. Leigh has submitted the paperwork to the State for them to issue us the funds. As a reminder, the funds will come directly from the Federal government through the State to us. No date has been set for this to occur. The LGC has issued some general guidance on how to handle the accounting of the funds once we receive them, but nothing else. They hope to receive more specific guidance in the near future. They do not have an expected date to receive the funds but they have submitted the required paperwork to the State.

The Police Department is holding another informal community diversity discussion forum on Thursday, June 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. in the first-floor conference room at City Hall. Also, the five new police vehicles have arrived at White's and will begin being outfitted for use. We will come back to City Council with a request to auction off 5-6 older cars that are now excess.

The outdoor pool was to be inspected today by the county health department and unless there are any problems, the Parks & Recreation Department plans to open the pool this Saturday, the 5<sup>th</sup>. He asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon if he had an update on the inspection. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied the wade pool and dive tank have passed. They have to take care of two small items for the training pool (large pool) and they will come back to inspect later this week. He still anticipates the pool opening this Saturday.

Mayor Doughtie asked how much did they charge for kids to go to the pool this year. Park & Recreation Director Simeon replied \$1 for residents and \$2 for non-residents.

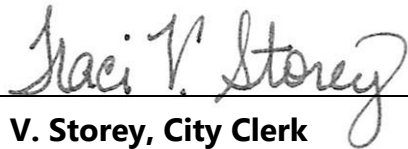
This Saturday, the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Fire Department will be conducting a smoke detector campaign in two different neighborhoods. They have a goal of installing 40 smoke detectors in homes. Also, this Saturday, Boy Scout Troop 144 will be placing new mulch down at Veterans Park. The mulch was donated by Haggerty's Restaurant.

The Babe Ruth U9 and U11 Tournament will be held at Ledgerwood Field from June 30-July 2, 2021. It is anticipated that each division will have six teams in the tournament.

Councilman Smith asked if they would provide security for the tournament. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied they had not gotten that far yet. Because of COVID-19 and the leagues not playing baseball this summer, the U9 and U11 tournament will be a district tournament. Not everyone will participate so they are anticipating it will be like a regular league night. He has not talked with Chief Martin

yet, but this tournament will be on a much more scaled version of what they have done in the past. The number of teams and amount playing in one day will be much less than what it has been. They will operate two fields: one on the front and one on the back. Since they will not play as many games as they did in the past so there will not be any overlap.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

  
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**Traci V. Storey, City Clerk**

**Approved by Council Action on: June 15, 2021**