



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, October 4, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem
Sandra W. Bryant)
Thomas Daughtry, Jr.)
Wayne Smith)
Rex Stainback)

Council Members

Kelly Traynham, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director
Bobby Martin, Police Chief
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Davis Wise, Planning & Development Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director*
Tony Hall, Main Street Development Director
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director

*Denotes joining the meeting via Zoom.

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and opened with an invocation.

Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau FY 2021-2022 Annual Report

Ms. Lori Medlin, President and CEO of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Annual Report. She highlighted the following in her presentation:

- Visitors to and within Halifax County spent \$119.11 million in 2021. This is an increase of 38% from 2020. 2020 was their COVID year and spending was down quite a bit from previous year. In 2021, spending was 6.49% higher than in 2019 which was the highest year.
- Spent \$26.79 million in Lodging; \$39.39 million in Food & Beverage; \$10.6 million in Recreation; \$8 million in Retail; \$18 million in Transportation.

- Travel & tourism industry directly employees more than 700 and indirectly employees over 1,000 people. Total payroll generated by direct employment in the tourism industry in 2021 was \$26.2 million.
- State tax revenue generated in Halifax County totaled \$5.4 million through state sales and excise taxes, and taxes on personal and corporate income.
- \$4.0 million in local taxes were generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel-supported businesses.
- Visitor spending in Halifax County saved each taxpayer \$194.81 in taxes in 2021.
- 2021-2022 Roanoke Rapids Occupancy Tax Expenditures:

Roanoke Canal Museum	\$8,000
Roanoke Canal Trail Maintenance	\$53,000
Marketing/Advertising	\$48,124.87
Hotel Logo Campaign (billboards)	\$18,018.60
Special Project - Chockoyotte	\$6,000
Hotel Security	\$0
Administrative Expenses	\$14,550
Interstate Lighting	\$2,139.73
Total	\$149,833.20

- The HCCVB Print Promotions reached over 10,540,800 readers.
- Social Media continues to be a priority for marketing our destination. They have 13,668 followers.
- Top platforms are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter with 1,246,575 impressions, 75,117 engagements and 54,228 video views.
- Billboards speak to largest audience. I-95 billboards reached over 127 million impressions last year.
- Project & Partnerships: Worked with Weldon on River Falls Park project. To date they have received \$850,000 in funding. Hope to receive a PARTF grant in 2023. Working with the Halifax Underground Railroad Committee. Also partnered with Weldon on a wayfinding signage program like they did with Roanoke Rapids.
- Worked with Halifax County Economic Development on a DOT Traffic Pattern Study at Exit 173 in preparation of new hotel which will break ground the end of November.
- Continue to plan Halifax 2026 to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Nation and signing of the Halifax Resolves and Declaration of Independence. She would like every community to get involved with the celebration.
- Helped fund a new Blacksmith Shop & Kitchen at the Bradford Denton House.
- Worked with Halifax County Economic Development and legislators to bring home a lot of funding for tourism related projects. Roanoke River Paddle Trail designation; Weldon Riverfront Enhancement Project; William R. Davie House and Main Street assistance for Enfield, Roanoke Rapids, Weldon and Scotland Neck.

- Sponsored many events and festivals in Halifax County.
- Attraction Visitation: Medoc Mountain – 193,892; Sylvan Heights – 55,878; Roanoke Canal Museum & Trail – 34,637; Historic Halifax – 25,726; Weldon Mills Distillery – 50,000 and Dog Run – 51,917 with daily average of 142.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Ms. Medlin what one thing they could do or improve on to bring in more tourism to Roanoke Rapids.

She replied they need more places for sporting events such as bigger fields, baseball and soccer fields. The economic impact of that is tremendous. She would be happy to partner with the City to do a study to tell them what it would bring in.

Ms. Medlin said the new and exciting activity on Roanoke Avenue is going to make a difference. There is some grant funding coming down the pipe. She encouraged the City to get involved with the Rural Transformation Grant process and apply for that grant.

Mayor Doughtie asked for an update on the Amtrak Station in Weldon. Ms. Medlin replied things were set back due to COVID but hopefully this year they will get back on the TIP. They have local funding in place and with the set back of one year they are probably three years away from the start of construction. It is still on the plan.

Ms. Medlin said the new Premier Blvd. Extension has tremendous potential for Roanoke Rapids and they need to think about how that area needs to be zoned. The property behind the houses could be utilized as a mixed use of more housing and retail. She said they work with a company called The Retail Coach to try to recruit businesses into the area. They met with them last week and will meet with them again next week.

Councilman Smith said the City had land at Ledgerwood Field and asked if she would help them develop recreation there. Ms. Medlin said she could help if it is youth related and brings tournament play in. He said it was wooded now, but it would be enough land for three to four soccer fields or more. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon and Ms. Medlin will plan to get together soon to discuss options. Councilman Smith asked Ms. Medlin if she had funding that could clear the land. She replied maybe, if it led to building to bring in tournaments.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he wasn't sure if the area would be large enough, but he wondered if working with Reginald Speight (USDA Rural Development) because they help outfit places. That would be a built in area for ball fields because people would be there already. Ms. Medlin stated building fields closer to Interstate 95 would be preferable.

Consideration of Capital Project Ordinance Accepting the Assistance to Firefighters Grant and Allocation for the Purchase of a New Fire Truck

Fire Chief Patrick said in the last meeting City Manager Traynham reported the Fire Department had been awarded a grant from FEMA. They had applied for the past several years but had not been successful. This year they were blessed to have been awarded the grant.

He asked City Council to adopt Ordinance 2022.21 to accept the Assistance for Firefighters Grant (AFG) and allocation for the purchase of the new fire truck. The grant would be for \$476,190 and there is a match to this grant in the amount of \$158,947.

Chief Patrick stated this new truck would replace Engine 142 that is in such rough shape. If City Council approves the purchase of a new truck, Engine 142 will be taken out of service and they will get rid of the truck.

He reported the first draw of the grant would be over \$120,000 and the remaining would be drawn upon arrival of the new fire truck. He has been told it would take 16 months for delivery of both trucks.

City Manager Traynham added there has been a price increase of the fire truck since they ordered the last truck in June. Chief Patrick stated the first truck ordered in June cost \$587,025 and the new truck will cost \$635,000. The vendor has reported there would be another price increase within the next couple of weeks that would affect the City's order in the amount of \$40,000. They are getting a price break for paying upfront; a \$26,000 discount.

Chief Patrick thanked his staff for working hard on applying for grants. He said they received word that the Halifax County Firefighters Association also received the regional grant for the VIPER radios in the amount of \$1.1M. The radios will be divided among all the fire departments throughout the county.

City Manager Traynham stated with the approval of the \$158,947 from the City's reserve, it would bring the ARP offset funds down to \$1.1M remaining. She said it was typical with federal grants to pay upfront and then get reimbursed over a period of time. The City does have the ARP offset funds to pay for the upfront cost associated with the fire truck.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adopt Ordinance No. 2022.21.

BUDGET AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS:

SECTION 1. The following additional amounts are hereby appropriated for the operation of City Government and its activities for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023, according to the following schedule:

SCHEDULE A – PROJECT FUND REVENUES

FEMA AFG Grant Award	\$476,190.00
Capital Project – Fire Truck – General Fund	<u>\$158,947.00</u>
Project Grant & Revenues – Fire Dept.	\$635,137.00
FUND PROJECT TOTAL	<u>\$635,137.00</u>

SECTION 2. The following additional revenues and reductions in appropriations are available for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023, in order to meet the foregoing appropriations, according to the following schedule:

SCHEDULE B – PROJECT FUND EXPENDITURES

FEMA AFG Grant Award	\$476,190.00
Capital Project – Fire Truck – General Fund	<u>\$158,947.00</u>
Project Expenditures – Fire Dept.	\$635,137.00
FUND PROJECT TOTAL	<u>\$635,137.00</u>

SECTION 3. This ordinance shall become effective upon adoption.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee addressed all City staff including City Manager Traynham. He said right now there are a lot of grants and monies out there. He asked if they felt like they were too busy to get all the grants that were out there.

Chief Patrick explained that some grants that they apply for and are awarded, they are not eligible to apply again for a couple of years. He said they had been applying for this AFG since the early 2000s. They have been awarded the grant in the past for other things such as air packs and radios. There are different sectors of grants and in 2018 they received the Fire Prevention Grant which awarded the department with the Safety House. They were actively searching and applying for grants.

City Manager Traynham added with some grant opportunities they have worked with and been in touch with some consultants that could help facilitate a grant application. Before they say no to any application, if assistance was needed as far as capacity with staff, they

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would come to City Council to ask for additional funds to help pay for assistance. It also depends on the grant application. Some require a letter of interest and trying to get commitments for external agencies while some require a whole library of information. She said staff has had a few different meetings about the Rural Transformation Grant opportunities. They continually explore all the opportunities they are eligible for.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated one of the reasons he said something about it was he saw on the news that Durham received \$40M and it wasn't for fire or recreation; it was housing related. He said the city has land they would like to see houses go up on it.

City Manager Traynham said it does require those partnerships; the City cannot do it alone. If they could get the right partners involved and staff has been in communication with some of them. She does feel the housing need is something they can all agree upon.

Consideration of CDBG Contract Award for the Purchase of a Restroom Facility Building for Construction at Chaloner Recreation Park

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported the City had earmarked funds with the CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization Grant project for a restroom facility building at Chaloner Recreation Center. Bids were solicited by staff and received from three vendors for a pre-cast restroom building. The bids were received from Smith-Midland, CXT and CorWorth. The CDBG consultant, Chris Hilbert, recommends the City accept the bid from Smith-Midland for \$75,686.

He stated he knew several Council members had some questions regarding the matter so before requesting action from City Council he, along with City Manager Traynham, would like to answer any questions they may have.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said City Manager Traynham did send them an email late this afternoon that they have not had too much time to look at. He had questions about the building being prefab and that the restrooms would be unisex. They have not typically seen that in the City's facilities per se.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied precast is becoming very popular with parks and recreation departments across the state. In speaking with some of his colleagues, for example High Point, has gone to all precast restrooms and concession stands. He inquired about them with the parks and recreation listserv and received a lot of positive comments about the precast buildings. He explained the precast buildings are made in a controlled environment and when it is finished, a crane will come in and put up the walls. They are

much stronger and longer lasting than stick built. It will also speed up the completion of the project.

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Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if they had a timeframe on that at this point. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied they would like to get it done as soon as possible. As noted in the materials they have before them, the next step would be to accept a general contractor through the consultant for grading, plumbing and electrical hook ups. As soon as City Council approves the precast building, they can get that started. They need to get the site prep set so when the precast building is completed they can get it put up.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked again what the timeframe would be. City Manager Traynham asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon how long after placing the order for the precast building it would take. He replied 3-6 months.

City Manager Traynham stated the action on the table tonight was to approve the expenditure for the building so the order could be placed.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon explained while they would be doing the grade work, prepping the plumbing and electrical, this facility is already being built thus saving time in the building process.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated his other question was about the unisex bathrooms. He understood they were trying to come up with a family oriented facility, but he was not sure if they needed to be in a public oriented place. He explained his concerns about if a child does not remember to lock the door and a child of the opposite sex goes into the restroom; he believed this could cause parents to get upset. He believes this could be an issue in the public's eye. He asked if they could work that out.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said the train of thought on this was "family" restrooms rather than unisex. It would be a single restroom and not a bath house style restroom with stalls and hand washing area. The idea was the parent/guardian opens the door, sees if anyone is in there, brings their family into the restroom and locks the door. They would proceed with using the changing table, washing hands or using the restroom facilities. The general people using the splash pad are mothers and kids. For example, a mother could have a small child that needs changing and say a 6-year old boy and she would want to take both in the restroom with her for safety purposes.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he sees the theory behind it, but he frequents the rec quite a bit and he will tell his grandson who is 6 years old to go to the restroom because he was old enough to go the bathroom on his own; that was actual. With only one toilet, he would not like to take his granddaughter in there after a boy.

City Manager Traynham said they could get a quote to add a urinal to the restroom. They could do a male or female restroom or the two family restrooms. She stated with the

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quantity of the crowd at the splash pad they believe this facility would be ample for it. They would not recommend this at Ledgerwood or one of the higher attended facilities. It would be a first come, first serve use.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he would like to see a urinal or something put in the restrooms if they were not going to agree with the other.

Mayor Doughtie suggested they ask the people that would use the facilities to see what they think.

City Manager Traynham said they could get some information and if City Council is not ready to make a decision tonight, they can come back in two weeks.

Councilman Smith stated if there were 25 kids and 15 parents at the splash pad and they think there would not be a line with just two toilets. Maybe he was looking at it wrong; he believes they would need more. He agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee's concerns about the restrooms being unisex.

Councilman Smith asked if the \$75,686 include the grading, plumbing and electrical work. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied no, just the precast building.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said when they first looked at the project at the community meeting, the idea included a place to change clothes. He asked if this was just for restrooms. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied it was just for restrooms. Part of that is due to the amount of funds that were designated for this project.

City Manager Traynham added under the CDBG they have \$100,000 total grant award towards the project out of the \$750,000. Some of the issues they have encountered are the site constraints as far as the FEMA floodplain and floodway there. Since the splash pad is not like a swimming pool where people shower afterwards, they did not see where they needed the cabana or locker room style facility. They felt the family style restroom provided ample space. They could look at different models and types of buildings that could provide a male, female and family restroom option.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if they could look into some other options to bring back to City Council. City Manager Traynham replied they could do that.

Councilwoman Bryant said she would like to see a combination, possibly with a separate dressing area along with the toilet and bathroom facilities within the same restroom.

City Manager Traynham said with the restrooms being ADA compliant, it does increase the

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area. They will bring some options back and demonstrate the costs associated.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reminded City Council that they will need to build on the other side where all the new renovations have taken place. They were very limited where they can put certain things; they do not have a lot of space there. The existing pad is 25' x 18'.

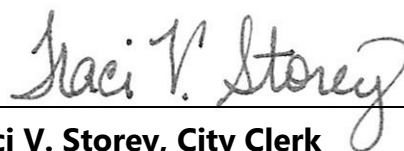
Councilman Smith stated he thought when they started on this project it was going to be like Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said with a changing room in the building. He asked 3-4 months ago why they had not already started on it since they had the money and now it is going to be six months or spring time before the facility is completed. They need to get on the ball and develop that facility even if they have to get some of citizens, Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and the City Manager to meet with Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to decide what they want to do. It may be an area between the pad and the playground equipment where it could be placed. He said it was not developed over there how he thought it was going to be developed. He was a little disappointed. They need to make sure Chaloner has the same facilities as everywhere else in the city. If it takes a little more money, that is what they need to do. They could possibly use some of the monies City Council designated for tourism projects.

Councilwoman Bryant stated it would definitely be worth it. She recalled Parks & Recreation Director Simeon told them there were people that have come from out of town to visit the splash pad. They need to make it as nice of a facility as they can for all citizens.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon will get more information to bring back to City Council at the Regular Meeting on October 18, 2022.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Stainback and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: October 18, 2022