



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

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on Tuesday, May 16, 2017 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)  
Wayne Smith)  
Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager  
Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney  
Traci Storey, City Clerk  
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager  
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director  
Chuck Hasty, Police Chief  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief  
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

**Council Members**

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 Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for May 16, 2017.

### **Unscheduled Public Comment**

#### **Richard Scott**

Mr. Scott stated he lived in Scotland Neck and was a volunteer for the Halifax County Crime Stoppers. He said they have sent out letters to towns and others requesting support. He read the letter which stated they were a non-profit charitable organization consisting of a small group of dedicated citizens who believe Crime Stoppers is a valuable tool to assist law enforcement in solving crimes and making the community safer. It stated law enforcement officers, county wide have said Crime Stoppers is effective in solving crimes. Crime Stoppers has paid for anonymous tips that lead to arrests for a wide range of crimes. He asked Council that when preparing for their upcoming budget, to please consider contributing to help support this worthy cause. He thanked Chief Hasty for allowing them the use of the meeting room to hold their monthly meetings.

#### **Ruthie Gregory**

Mrs. Gregory asked what was the goal in regards to the Streetscape plan. She said her thoughts were to bring shoppers to the Avenue, but by just beautifying it, it was not going to do that. She said she visited Rocky Mount recently because they had gone through this - planting trees. She stated the merchants were very upset with the situation because people were not coming. She reported she interviewed three different merchants. She said they had tried to enhance the back entrances because there was parking in the back. She thought that would be an idea instead putting so much on the Avenue and taking away spaces. She said parking spaces was one of the things the City needed to emphasize. She said the City had beautiful holly trees on the Avenue but they were not being trimmed in the correct way; they were being trimmed like a shrub. She said she had given demonstrations on trimming to two of the Master Gardeners classes and one at the library. She said she would be happy to do that for maintenance or whomever was trimming the trees. She said there was one tree on the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Jackson Street that had never been trimmed; she suggested they go by and see how beautiful that tree was. She requested they keep the trees because they are pretty and already there.

### **Approval of Council Minutes**

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to approve the May 2, 2017 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as written.

## **Appointments/Reappointments**

### **Library Advisory Committee**

City Clerk Storey stated the terms for Brenda Stephenson, Dr. James Ketoff and William Mueller expire May 23, 2017. She explained all three members have served the maximum 2 year term, therefore if Council approved the reappointments, they would need to include waiving the City policy in the motion. She reported it was a unanimous vote for all three members in the ballot taken earlier.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to waive the City Policy and reappoint the three individuals to the Library Advisory Committee.

### **Planning Board/Board of Adjustment**

City Clerk Storey stated the term for Sherry (Hux) Mills will expire June 1, 2017. She said Mrs. (Hux) Mills has expressed interest and is eligible for reappointment.

City Clerk Storey reported the City had also received an application from Kathryn Strickland to serve on the board. She said currently the only vacancy on the board was for an ETJ member and Ms. Strickland resides in the city limits. She said Council took a ballot vote earlier where it was unanimous to reappoint Mrs. (Hux) Mills.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to reappoint Sherry (Hux) Mills to the Planning Board/Board of Adjustment.

## **New Business**

### **Streetscape Plan Presentation**

Main Street Director Caudle reported in the summer of 2016, the City of Roanoke Rapids and Main Street Roanoke Rapids were fortunate enough to secure NC Downtown Revitalization Grant funding as part of the State's FY 2016-2017 budget. She said a portion of the grant was allocated to support the City's efforts to develop a Historic Roanoke Avenue Streetscape Design Master Plan. She stated this plan seeks to provide a vision for improved pedestrian function, safety, and physical appearance of the street while establishing character reflective of the local community, inviting to visitors and a catalyst for economic reinvestment. She

added a design concept plan for 1026 Roanoke Avenue was also developed as part of this planning effort.

She said in October 2016, they engaged Rivers & Associates consulting firm out of Greenville, NC to assist the City and Main Street non-profit in our public visioning process and to deliver a Streetscape and 2016 Master Plan which included the final report with schematic level colored rendered drawings.

She said a project kick off meeting was held in November 2016. She stated in the meeting they explored the character of the city, formulated project goals and objectives and identified potential concerns. She said participants included various City staff, some City-elected officials, representation from the NCDOT and various Main Street Roanoke Rapids board and committee members.

She reported they engaged the public during two public input sessions which were held December 13, 2016 and February 20, 2017. She said at the meetings, Rivers & Associates presented and collected feedback on design concept options for both streetscape planning concepts and 1026 Roanoke Avenue green space redevelopment.

She stated tonight's presentation will be by Rivers & Associates led by landscape architect Sharon Rhue. She said this presentation yields a final set of design recommendations which identifies proposed streetscape and 1026 Roanoke Avenue improvements and provides direction for long-term implementation.

She said no action was required by Council tonight at the conclusion of the presentation. She stated the final presentation would be on display at City Hall for public comment and the goal was to add the Streetscape Master Plan adoption to a Council meeting agenda in June.

She added the final design concept is a direct reflection of the public's vision and input during this planning process. She stated there was not enough time to thank each participant by name, but she did want to commend the City officials and staff, especially Kelly Lasky who has been involved since the beginning, the Main Street board and committee members, Avenue and business property owners, City Beautification Committee members and general citizens and public for their valuable participation in this project.

Main Street Director Caudle introduced Sharon Rhue who gave a PowerPoint presentation. *(Presentation on file in City Clerk's Office).*

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated the concept plan looks good and asked if there was a cost concept for the project. Ms. Rhue replied they were not tasked with doing any cost estimating but there are a lot of variables with that. She could not give a current estimate on what it would cost.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was any conversation on truck traffic on Roanoke Avenue. Ms. Rhue replied there was a lot of discussion on the truck traffic and making accommodations for that. She said it was her understanding that NCDOT did not want to reroute traffic so the trucks would remain on the Avenue and they would need to turn at certain locations. She suggested going through the auto-turn exercise again during development. She said it doesn't change the capacity of the trucks to a great extent to add the curb extensions, but it does improve pedestrian safety.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Main Street Director Caudle how many businesses were in the uptown, downtown area of Roanoke Avenue. She replied over 200 businesses that were a mix of retail and service type businesses.

### **City Manager's Report**

City Manager Scherer reported the City has completed the necessary actions to end the original 2007 bond agreement with the swap arrangement and implement the new bond financing loan with Bank of America. The two components of the new loan package, taxable and tax-exempt, will cost approximately \$1 million, with an annual savings of over \$750,000 from the original bond package. The first quarterly payment isn't due until August 1<sup>st</sup>, which helps our budget balances, as previously we owed over \$900,000 as of July 1<sup>st</sup>. He recognized Mayor Doughtie, Leigh Etheridge and Gilbert Chichester for their efforts in getting this complicated financial transaction achieved without difficulty.

He said now that the Bank of America negotiations were behind them, he proposed a meeting with Council on Wednesday, May 31<sup>st</sup> to review the City budget proposal before formally presenting it at the June 6<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, with a public hearing, then adopting the final budget at the June 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. He proposed meeting at 1:30 p.m. on the 31<sup>st</sup> in the first floor conference room at City Hall, while offering a tour of the City's facilities that morning beginning at 9 a.m. and then lunch with the department heads.

City Manager Scherer highlighted several pieces of new legislation in various committees at the State Legislature that may have an impact on the City.

- a) HB 900, Safe Infrastructure; this bill would allow all municipalities to choose one of three revenue-raising options, any of which would be subject to voter referendum. All proceeds from any option approved by voters would be used to construct and improve public infrastructure and facilities or for economic development or for both. The three options authorized by the bills, from which a municipality could choose, include a municipal-only quarter-cent sales tax, a prepared meals tax, or an occupancy tax (subject to a cap).
- b) SB 126: Eliminates the current adjustment factors applied to the half-cent local sales tax imposed under Article 40. Replaces those factors with new adjustment factors that are tied to the economic development tier ranking given to the county and municipalities within it that levy this tax. Companion Bill to HB 522. Initial estimates show this bill would add approximately \$274,000 revenue to the City.
- c) HB 797: PD Body Cameras. Clarifies the definition of “deceased person” for the purposes of this law, such that the person was living at the time the recording began and died during or subsequent to the event captured on the recording. Adds two days to the current three-day response time for law enforcement agencies to provide or deny disclosure of a recording after a request for disclosure. Expands the purposes for which a recording may be disclosed to include a city manager.
- d) HB 750: Gaming Commission. Institutes a new statewide video sweepstakes regulatory scheme whereby the only legal terminals and retail locations in which those terminal are located, are those licensed and regulated by the NC Gaming Commission (renamed under this bill from the NC State Lottery Commission). Prohibits terminals in locations where the establishment is engaged exclusively in the business of housing such video sweepstakes machines. Otherwise, allows terminals only in establishments with certain alcohol beverage permits that are more than 50 feet from a church or school. Grants enforcement authority to a state-level agency, the Department of Public Safety’s Alcohol Law Enforcement Branch.

City Manager Scherer announced the grand opening of the new Ollie’s store will be tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. and invited all to attend and participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee thanked Mayor Doughtie, Finance Director Etheridge and Attorney Chichester and for their efforts getting this financial transaction achieved.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee inquired about item 3(c) - HB 797 whether the two days added to the current three-day response in relation to a deceased person was straight across the board or only those that were deceased. City Manager Scherer replied they were two different issues; they would add two days to the current three day request for anyone requesting to disclose or view a video. He added they also changed the definition of a deceased person in the law.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about item 3(d) – HB 750 and how that would affect those current existing businesses. City Manager Scherer replied he did not see anything in the law that discusses any current operations; it was an attempt to regulate it statewide and control it at the state level.

Mayor Pro Tem said it appears that it would be regulated by the State Gaming Commission and prohibited where the establishment was engaged exclusively in that business. City Manager Scherer stated there would have to be another business there along with video terminals. He said they could not open a business and just have video terminals there according to this law. He added that all these bills were in committees right now under consideration; he just wanted to highlight them and let Council know they were being worked on.

Mayor Doughtie said he agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee on the refinancing and they did manage to get through it, but stated there was a lot of difficulty along the way. He said they got through it with the efforts of City Manager Scherer, Finance Director Etheridge and Attorney Chichester along with the LGC, the Bond Council and everybody that was working to try to help the City make this become a reality. He said they were constantly asking for more information and those three individuals were able to get it so when they did go last Wednesday to sign paperwork, everything was in order. He said it went over with no difficulty at all.

### **Finance Director's Report**

Finance Director Etheridge presented the April 2017 Financial report. She stated during the month, the Finance Department issued 41 purchase orders, wrote 74 payroll checks, 326 direct deposit vouchers and 233 accounts payable checks.

She reported for the month of April the General Fund year-to-date receipts totaled \$13,247,946.25. She said the year-to-date expenditures totaled \$13,642,951.25. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures stands at 80.7%.

She stated at ten months year-to-date, 83.3% of the budget year has passed. As a result the year to date expenditures exceeded revenues by \$395,005.00.

She said at the present time, the City still remains in a spending freeze for non-emergent, non-essential operational expenditure requests.

She reported the April costs associated with the 2007 Series Bonds totaled \$107,898.38. This includes \$46,904.17 swap payment, \$11,705.22 interest payment, \$43,664.81 quarterly re-marketing fee, \$3,839.18 Merrill Lynch interest payment, \$1,640.00 administrative fee and \$145.00 wire fee.

She said in addition to the higher theatre payments during the month of April, the City also processed the required annual Installment Note Payable to SunTrust Bank for the Fire Ladder Truck in the amount of \$100,025.00.

She stated the 2016-2017 fiscal year audit has been scheduled with Gregory T. Redman, CPA for the week of August 28, 2017. She said Finance staff continues to assist whenever needed with the Series 2007 Theatre Bond restructure to assure a smooth process for the City Manager and the City.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked where the City stood this time of year in comparison with other years in relation to collections and where they were on expenditures. Finance Director Etheridge replied the City's expenditures were still trending above revenues. She said the \$395,000 deficit was a culmination of the loss in privilege licenses as well as the addition of Theatre expenditures that they still have to maintain while they own the building. She said as far as revenue and expenditure projections going into June, it was too early to tell in mid-May. She added as she learns more, she will be forwarding that information to the City Manager.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the City was pretty much finished with the fees and swap payments. Finance Director Etheridge replied the City still had accrued interest that they were responsible for through June 12<sup>th</sup>. She said the first payment would be August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Councilman Smith asked how much that payment would be. City Manager Scherer replied approximately \$250,000 which was much better than the \$900,000 the City previously paid July 1<sup>st</sup> every year. He said it put the City in a hole the first part of every fiscal year.



Mayor Doughtie asked how many more payments the City had on the Fire Ladder Truck. Finance Director Etheridge replied one; it would be completely paid off in 2018.

Councilman Smith asked if the City had used any of the monies Council approved to take out of the fund balance. Finance Director Etheridge replied they had not used any of the monies, but it was still in the budget to use as needed towards the end of fiscal operations.

## Departmental Reports

### Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney stated the department was currently advertising for a Police Officer and they would be conducting interviews the end of May. She reported they received 18 applications during the month of April and hired 4 new employees. She said two were Sanitation Workers - Brett Griffin and David Ramsey, a Sanitation Equipment Operator - Reginald Garner and they rehired Ruby Mason as Part-time Library Assistant who was in attendance tonight and had previously worked for the City for a long time.

She said on April 21<sup>st</sup>, BARC held its Annual Fish Fry at ProBuild with the help of the D.I.R.T. team. She announced the profit from the sale was \$1,265.97. She said with this money, BARC would be presenting a scholarship this year. She stated applications were sent out and were due by May 3<sup>rd</sup>. She said they had two City employees' children that would be receiving \$500 scholarships and they would be recognized at the June 6<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. She thanked all those that helped with the fish fry and those who purchased tickets because the funds raised go toward awarding these scholarships.

### Police

Police Chief Hasty presented his report for the month of April. He reported the department currently has 4 openings due to 2 taking higher paying jobs elsewhere, 1 retiring and 1 left the department. He said they would be doing interviews the end of this month.

He said the department has started their bike patrol. He and Deputy Chief Jackson have been out the last three weeks riding in the mornings and afternoons going to different places. He said it was a good conversation topic and allows community involvement from the police department.

City Manager Scherer asked Chief Hasty how many bikes they were putting out on the street. Chief Hasty replied they usually go out with two at a time, but the department has three bicycles.

### **Planning & Development**

Planning & Development Director Lasky reported the department was busy in the month of April taking Special Event requests at Becker Village Mall with the carnival and petting zoo.

She attended a Local Update of the Census Bureau data collecting and addressing information that would be coming up with the 2020 Census.

She said the department was reviewing site plans for the Roanoke Valley Early College building that will be on Jefferson Street. She said the significant rains the past several weeks has impacted the progress of construction projects.

She announced the Planning Board will hold a meeting on Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. here in the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall to review a Conditional Use Permit request for an electronic gaming operation/sweepstakes at Suite 145 in Becker Village Mall. She reminded Council it was a quasi-judicial/evidentiary hearing and the public hearing has been set for June 6<sup>th</sup> at 5:15 p.m. before the City Council. She added that if Council received any comments or questions, they need to wait until the public hearing to receive any information and encourage individuals to attend and to contact the department for more information.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated she wanted to comment on to the question Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee had earlier concerning the electronic gaming operations. She said what the department has seen a lot more of recently was the businesses will say they were doing copying, faxing and other business administrative type things, but they also have computers for people to play games. She said that was the approach they had seen recently.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported the department has a busy weekend coming up. He said they would be honoring the military veterans this weekend with the Colton James concert at the Theatre. He clarified that the doors would open at 12 noon for vendors and the veterans to enjoy food and fellowship. He said the Veterans Museum will have a display set up. He announced the concert would start at 7 p.m. with Mikele Buck opening up followed by the Moonshine Band and then Colton James will play, finishing up around 10:30 – 11 p.m.

He announced the following shows will be at the Theatre: legendary rock band 38 Special on June 2<sup>nd</sup>; A Tribute to the Blues on June 17<sup>th</sup> and country singer Jamey Johnson on July 21<sup>st</sup>.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reminded Council that a few months ago some students attended a meeting where they talked about no smoking in the City parks and doing some signage. He presented the sign and stated the process led to the department selecting Brendon Short's sign. He said with program, they have given the City 20-25 signs to put up in all the City parks. He announced this Saturday at 1 p.m. the sign will be unveiled at Chockoyotte Park.

He thanked the Church of Christ on 10<sup>th</sup> Street for their donation of the lighted sign at the Jo Story Senior Center and their support. He reported he did send a letter to the pastor who read the letter to the congregation.

He reported he did not have any new information regarding the Chaloner pool. He stated he was still waiting on quotes and hoped to have something to report next meeting as they come in.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he thought the sign looked really nice; he did a great job and asked what it was made of. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied aluminum like any other street sign the City has.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee thanked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon for continuing to try and get the estimates back as soon as possible because there was still a lot of interest even though it is known that the pool will not be open this year.

### **Public Works**

Public Works Director Chalker presented the April report. He reported the cemetery collected \$10,627 in the month of April with at year-to-date total of \$110,374.00.

He stated grass cutting season was here in full force and the department sent out 152 letters to various property owners; most were private residences, but they do cover some commercial properties as well. He said they only cut 8 properties which were toward the end of the month, but assured Council they would see an increase in the number of properties cut next month. He reported the department spent 698 man hours cutting grass.

Public Works Director Chalker said the oldest section of the cemetery that abuts an alley was losing ground and they were about to lose some of the oldest

tombstones in the cemetery. He reported the street department did a bank repair in hopes to stabilize and keep the older stones from moving.

Councilman Smith asked Public Works Director Chalker to let the employees know they do a good job keeping the 10<sup>th</sup> Street entrance looking nice and the grass mowed.

### **Fire**

Fire Chief Coggins reported the Fire Department responded to 125 calls of service during the month of April with a response time just over 5 minutes. He said in effort to reduce unnecessary calls, they deferred 9 calls and remained in standby status.

He said firefighters were engaged in 909 man-hours of training covering various topics including preventative maintenance, equipment inspections, safety training and specialty training. He stated the Inspection Division conducted 29 fire inspections and 4 plan reviews.

He reported the department completed all of their hose testing as well as the hydrant testing for the year. He said they had 650 fire hydrants and the firefighters did a great job finishing it in a timely manner.

He said the department has submitted its budget requests for the upcoming budget meeting. He said Deputy Chief Clements and three other fire department employees are in Wilson this week taking a Fire Investigation class. He said he would be in Southern Pines next week for an Executive Leadership class sponsored by the National Fire Academy.

Fire Chief Coggins reported the department assisted Ken Wilson with the Son of the American Revolution flag burning ceremony at Roanoke Rapids High School.

### **Main Street**

Main Street Director Caudle highlighted a couple of upcoming events that were free for the public to attend.

May 19<sup>th</sup> – Kickoff to the Fridays in the Park Summer Concert series with Exodus Band which includes activities offered by the Pregnancy Center: Walk For Life, BBQ plate sale and Stray Cats Car Show. She said the remaining summer concert series will take place the third Friday in June, July and August in Centennial Park.

May 25<sup>th</sup> – Arts on the Avenue event in uptown Roanoke Rapids from 5 – 8 p.m. She said this was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year hosting the event where they partner with the Halifax County Arts Council. She said the Arts Council Gallery hosts their annual student show that evening from 5 – 8 p.m. She reported several businesses and over 30 artists would be participating. She stated their goal was to host the event again in October of this year.

June 20<sup>th</sup> – Main Street Board Meeting at 12 noon where they will finalize their FY 2017-2018 work plan; Council is invited to attend. She announced outside of June, their board meetings take place the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month in the Conference Room at City Hall.

<b>Other Business/Comments by Council Members</b>
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Councilwoman Scarbrough recognized and thanked Chief Hasty for his efforts with the Fallen Officers Memorial Service held last Friday night; it was an excellent program. Chief Hasty replied Captain Bryant did a lot of work putting it together and thanked everyone for coming out to the event.

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

  
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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: June 6, 2017**