



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, August 21, 2018 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)
Carol H. Cowen)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Chuck Hasty, Police Chief
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director

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

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members if there were any changes or any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening.

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt to adopt the business agenda for August 21, 2018 as presented.

Special Recognitions

Roanoke Valley U8, U10, U12 and U15 Softball Teams

Mayor Doughtie recognized the Roanoke Valley U8, U10, U12 and U15 Softball Teams and read the following letter to each team:

Dear Roanoke Valley Softball Athletes and Coaches,

As Mayor of the City of Roanoke Rapids, I extend my sincere congratulations to every one of you for a most successful 2018 program.

The season that you have completed provided you with more advanced levels of sportsmanship and decision making. As you continue on your journey through life, you will look back and realize how opportunities like the ones you have just been exposed to will have lifelong benefits.

Our community is extremely proud to have had you represent us in a meaningful, positive and professional manner.

Sincerely,

*Emery G. Doughtie
Mayor*

Councilman Bobbitt presented each coach and athlete with a City lapel pin.

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Jerry McDaniel

Mr. McDaniel stated he and the mayor were discussing coal ash dumping in the Roanoke River. He believed he said they should wait and see how something similar progressed concerning the Duke Energy Dan River coal ash spill. He said so far the abandoned clay mines they tried to store it in, keep in mind that clay is supposed to be the magic liner and cover up for coal ash, are now leaking approximately 3 million gallons per month. He believed that was a self-reported figure and self-reported figures tend to be a little less than what you got caught with last time you had an official inspection. He said this is not leakage, this is flow. How do you think things are going? Should we wait until it gets hauled down Roanoke Avenue from Chatham County to Seaboard? Why is it that a purposely built coal ash mine field closed with unused capacity while Weldon has Westmoreland coal ash all over and under property and in Arthurs Creek in Northampton County? Do people actually ask to live and work on a coal ash dump? Also, a while back citizens against coal ash were

roasting a state representative because they thought he sold property to VistaGreen, a coal ash wheeler dealer. They seemed upset about the land wheeling and dealing shenanigans involved in the Lowe's Distribution Center and the representative. Now he was entertaining the thought whether a state representative who has gone to the Governor's office and Speaker's office to ensure that VistaGreen's business was dead upon arrival in District 27, but actually quietly standing by while his banking buddies were financially involved in the exact same business venture. He believed that would be a quandary for even an ethical representative much less for the one we have. He said he was not attacking the paper mill; he happens to be kin to who paid the kickbacks and also kin to who took the kickbacks. He asked if anyone wanted to see coal ash. Mr. McDaniel held up a glass mason jar. He said Mr. Chichester suggested he go get some, so he pulled up next to the Rockfish Capitol of the World Bridge, kicked the door open and scooped it up. He happened to be riding with an Associated Press reporter from Richmond. Her cameraman asked if he needed help getting the cap on the jar. He said it was an amazing thing; it looks like graphite and he guessed it was okay stored in the jar except for any radium. He stated we had a coal ash problem and the Associated Press was willing to pay to assist him with some samplings so we'll discuss this later.

Scott Aman

Mr. Aman stated he came before Council at a previous meeting and shared his concerns and thoughts on the widening of Hwy. 125. For clarity, he was very supportive of what NCDOT plans to do to our area and in our area. He just believes specifically how they have this section of the corridor designed is wider than it needs to be; we do not need a 23 foot grassed median there that requires NCDOT to take more property from adjoining landowners and it also restricts the left-hand turns to adjoining property owners down the corridor. He remains open-minded to what NCDOT has to present this evening, but those were his primary concerns as an individual business owner out on that corridor as well as a stakeholder in economic development and as a citizen and community person in the Roanoke Rapids area. He believes how they started at the Wendy's area down to Touchstone Bank is a better solution which is five lanes, two up, two back with a turning lane down the middle. They would actually build a road that was not as wide and he would think it would be less costly because they would be taking less taxable, marketable, buildable developable property from landowners adjoining that corridor.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to approve the August 7, 2018 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as written.

Appointments/Reappointments

Recreation Advisory Committee

City Clerk Storey advised the term for Scott Hall on the Recreation Advisory Committee will expire September 9, 2018. He has requested to serve another term by submitting a volunteer application which was included in the Council packet.

She stated a ballot vote was taken earlier and Mr. Hall received a unanimous vote to be reappointed. She requested Council consider a motion to reappoint Mr. Hall to the Recreation Advisory Committee.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to reappoint Mr. Hall to the Recreation Advisory Committee.

New Business

Consideration of NCDOT Municipal Ordinance Certificate to Enact Speed Limit on SR 1745 (Old Farm Road)

Public Works Director Chalker reported NCDOT has investigated a 45-mph section of roadway located just inside the City limits of Roanoke Rapids on Old Farm Road from US 158 to NC 125 that had no ordinance written for this section. To enact the speed limit and make this section of roadway legal, an ordinance must be written and it is necessary for the City of Roanoke Rapids to execute a Municipal Ordinance Certificate. He stated this was a matter of housekeeping that was overlooked previously.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Cowen and unanimously carried to adopt the Certification of Municipal Declaration to Enact Speed Limit on Old Farm Road from US 158 to NC 125 (Ordinance No. 2018.05).

Consideration of Resolution Requesting NCDOT Consider Redesign of Project U-5725 to Include an Unobstructed Center Turn Lane

Mayor Doughtie called on NC DOT Division 4 Engineer, Ronnie Keeter to give a history and overview of the project prior to Council taking any action.

Mr. Keeter gave a PowerPoint presentation (On file in the Clerk's Office) of the NC 125 Widening & Improvement Project (Project U-5725) which involves widening a 2-lane section to a 4-lane divided section of NC 125 where it turns from Old Farm Road to I-95. He explained the current conditions and why they were proposing to widen this section. It was due to the number of traffic accidents that has occurred on this section of road. A total of 110 crashes were reported over the past five (5) years.

He presented the timeline of the project where Roanoke Rapids adopted a CTP (Comprehensive Transportation Plan) in November 2007 which identified this section of NC 125 needed improvement. NCDOT completed a Feasibility Study in 2010 where they try to do traffic forecasting looking out 30 years. In 2011, the Peanut Belt RPO, which Halifax County and Roanoke Rapids are members, submitted this project as a 4-lane section. It did not make the cut in 2011, but later was programmed in 2017 as a project. He said on October 24, 2017, they held a public meeting in this meeting room and showed a concept which showed a divided median. He noted this project was also shown with the Premier Blvd. Extension project. His stated that was the history and going forward they have the following scheduled:

- Right-of Way 05-15-2018 R-3822 Start Work 12-03-2018
- Advertisement 08-21-2018 *(Premier Blvd. Extension)*
- Project Let 09-18-2018 U-5725 Start Work 10-14-2019
- Completion 10-01-2021 *(NC 125 Widening)*

Mr. Keeter presented the conceptual designs with the divided median. He said they did make some changes according to comments they received at the public meeting. Some of the changes allow full access while some allow left overs. He stated the three alternatives they have now moving forward were to proceed with the current design toward construction, remove the NC 125 project and only construct the Premier Blvd. Extension or investigate other design alternatives, but NCDOT would not cover any cost of additional planning. He noted as far as the five lane roads, they used to build roads that way and for the near future it may be okay. But as they develop and as they get into the 15-30 year forecasting which they have to design for, they no longer build the five-lane curb and gutter sections.

Continuing with the presentation, State Traffic Management Engineer, Joseph Hummer stated left turns were his specialty and it has been for about 30 years now. He had done a lot of the research that he was going to show them and said he has been involved with this for a long time. He addressed the concerns of business and property owners about the change in customer access with a proposed upgrade which includes a median. He acknowledged this was a widely held perception and they face this across the state and country. He presented facts that medians can benefit businesses because they are safer, reduce travel time, easier for pedestrians and improve aesthetics. Most importantly was the safety aspect because a median reduces conflict points thus creating a crash reduction factor (CRF%). He presented several supporting studies on safety. He said a divided road with a median reduces travel time, safer for pedestrians and aesthetically pleasing with plantings. Lastly, he presented data that concluded medians had no effect on sales/revenue for businesses in the corridor based on sales tax data, but survey responses from business owners were still negative. He stated theoretically, medians should be good for business while

their main concern was for safety. He recommended they help them go ahead with the project to save lives, save injuries and support the median. He said the median project will do those things and asked that they work with them to make the project as good as it can be and to help change perceptions. They were open to suggestions to tweak some things.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was going to be a left or right turn at the section in front of the rescue squad. Mr. Keeter replied both, it was going to be a new intersection there with the new road and there was not a median. He asked when the project would start. Mr. Keeter said the project was proposed to start December 3, 2018, but it was a two-part project. One was Premier Blvd. Extension and the other was NC 125.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked to look at the section where the property owner (New Dixie Oil) has expressed his concerns. Mr. Keeter said they were realigning Three Bridges Road to come to an intersection which is currently Sheraton Drive. They would close the signal where Three Bridges Road comes out now to get it further away from I-95.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee also asked who would maintain the median. Mr. Keeter replied NCDOT would mow it. If they are requested by the municipality to do any planting, they take 1-3% of the TIP money and plant in the median, but they ask the municipality to maintain it through a municipal agreement.

Councilman Bobbitt asked what they planned to put in the median to prevent reckless or drunk drivers from crossing over and hitting head on. Mr. Keeter said they had road side design guidelines that have what type of planting that is allowed in the median. Councilman Bobbitt asked if there would be an earthen berm or cable. Mr. Keeter replied it would not be a cable; it would either be a ditch section to drain water and curb. Mr. Hummer added that crash tests show once a median is put in, there is almost no head on crashes any more.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Mr. Keeter to explain how customers would be able to enter the New Dixie Oil property if coming from Roanoke Rapids toward I-95. Mr. Keeter stated if it was the way it was designed, they would have a left over or go to the intersection and take a left onto the new Premier Blvd. Extension.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the Premier Blvd. Extension project. Mr. Keeter explained the part of this project R-3822 is building a bridge over the creek. She asked when was it scheduled to start. He replied if they stay on schedule, it should start December 2018. She asked how close they were to staying on schedule. He said it was being advertised for bids now.

Mayor Doughtie stated the action requested for Council this evening was to consider a motion for adoption of Resolution 2018.05 requesting NCDOT consider a redesign of Project U-5725 to include an unobstructed center turn lane. He said Council had heard a lot of information tonight from NCDOT, which for him was the first time he had heard some of that information, and asked what the pleasure of the Council was at this time.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked what the options were again. Mayor Doughtie called on Mr. Keeter to review the options. He stated the options were:

- Proceed with current design toward construction
- Remove NC 125 project and only construct Premier Blvd. Extension
- Investigate other design alternatives, but NCDOT will not cover any cost of additional planning/design

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the note on the slide which states NCDOT no longer builds 5-lane roads with open turn lane. Mr. Keeter replied he was not sure on a state-wide level, but there were none proposed in their division.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried that at this time Council not adopt any resolution regarding NCDOT's design or changing any design.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer reported the City Police Department last week coordinated and conducted an active shooter exercise at Manning Elementary School. Also last week, the City Fire Department conducted their 4th annual Fire Safety event at Kirkwood Adams Community Center, which was well attended by the community.

He said the citizens of Roanoke Rapids should be proud of their public safety forces and their efforts to protect the community from harm. These two events are just an example of how our police and fire departments conduct their operations to try to prevent bad things from happening to anyone, but are prepared to respond to emergency situation to mitigate the results of a dangerous or disastrous situation.

He reported the Police Department had a total number of 2,353 calls for response in July and the Fire Department had 191 calls for response. The calls for both departments run the gamut from papers served to motor vehicle collisions to arrests to structure fires to first responder needs to community projects such as Barbershop Talks with the Police Chief and Fire Prevention training with 33 children at a local church.

City Manager Scherer stated the personnel in both departments do jobs that most of us don't want to do, but are glad they are there to do them for us. They train for the worst case scenarios that we are glad don't usually happen, such as an active school shooter or a fully engulfed house on fire with people inside. The police and fire departments personnel reach out and work with our citizens every day to try to help them avert a catastrophe or a bad decision in their lives. They would rather do that any day than respond to a tragedy like a fire or an accident or an arrest or an overdose, where someone's life or lives are tragically affected forever.

He said the department managers are prepared to provide you their reports on their activities and answer any questions you may have about their departments.

Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Etheridge presented the July 2018 Financial Report. During the month of July, the Finance Department issued 133 purchase orders, wrote 258 payroll checks, 335 direct deposit vouchers and 220 accounts payable checks. The operating statement shows the results of operations for the current fiscal year.

She reported the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$64,842.12. The percentage of actual money collected of adopted budgeted figures total 0.4%. General Fund year to date expenditures totaled \$1,536,093.96. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures total 9.1%. After the month of July, 8.34% of the budget year has been completed. Year to date expenditures exceeded revenues by (\$1,471,251.84). She noted at this same time last year, the amount was (\$1.1M). The difference for that slight increase in deficit was due to the employee one-time bonus that was provided to the employees totaling \$262,000. They were looking at a timing situation where they know revenues would be collected going into September.

Finance Director Etheridge announced the year-end close is underway as Finance prepares for the fiscal year 2017-2018 audit. The auditors will be on site the week of August 27th, 2018. During this time, Greg Redman and his team will be performing field work standards as required by NCGS 159-34.

She stated the Powell Bill Certified Expenditures report was completed and submitted to the NC Department of Transportation on July 30, 2018. This ensures fiscal compliance for both program regulations and funding requirements.

Departmental Reports

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney presented the July report. She reported the current vacancies were for a PT Public Works Worker, an Equipment Mechanic in the Garage, a Code Enforcement Officer – Building Inspector and there were a couple of Police Officer positions. During the month of July they received 20 applications and had 3 new hires.

Police

Police Chief Hasty presented his July report. He reported the department had been busy this past week. They participated in the Fire Safety Fair, an Active Shooter Drill, the Gregory B. Davis Foundation Bike Ride (provided an escort) and the school supply give away provided by the Authentic Women of God on Roanoke Avenue which was very successful. He said they also participated in the Patient Appreciation Days at Rural Health.

He said the Active Shooter Drill was a great success. They learned some things they need to improve on, but overall they worked well together with all the other law enforcement agencies, Fire, EMS, Public Works, the school district and even the Parks & Recreation department. A call was made requesting a van to haul the teachers away that was supposed to be simulated, but they sent a van anyway.

He announced this Thursday, the department would be holding a Back to School cookout at the A&D Laundromat and Minimart at 2nd and Roanoke Avenue. They would be cooking hotdogs and invited everyone to attend. He said Chief Coggins had been talking with Lance Martin about bringing back the Turkey Bowl so they were looking at having the City versus the County and any monies raised would be donated to Battalion Chief Kevin Hawkins who is battling cancer.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky was absent, no report was given.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon announced the 40th Anniversary for the Jo Story Senior Center for Active Adults is scheduled for Thursday, September 13th at 6 p.m. He invited everyone to come out and help celebrate the 40th anniversary. He said he has been working with the Canal Commission and Halifax County Arts Council to place a mural at the Canal Museum. They thought originally the mural would go on the back of the museum, but after some conversations and the mural being 8' x 32',

it would not fit on the back. He will continue to work with them on the logistics and report back to Council when it is finalized.

He said the TJ Davis Recreation outdoor pool closed this past Saturday for the summer. Even with all the rain, they still served over 5,000 patrons. He would be attending the PARTF grant awards meeting this Friday, August 24th in Raleigh where they would be announcing the grant recipients which ours is the Chaloner Park renovations; he hopes to bring back good news.

Councilman Smith asked if the City had already received some grant monies. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied yes. Councilman Smith asked if plans had been made to start the splash pad. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said they were waiting to see what comes out on Friday. They applied for \$200,000 and they may get the \$200,000 or they may get a portion of that or none. If they do not get all of the \$200,000 that has been set aside for the PARTF grant, they may have to go back to the drawing board to tweak a few things to fit the budget. He stated the splash pad would still be built. That was their number one goal and the \$200,000 would take care of that, the other \$200,000 on the drawings show parking and playground equipment so some things may have to be changed around if they do not receive that full amount. He said he was hoping that would not happen and he would be bringing back good news on Friday.

Councilman Smith asked if he brings back good news on Friday, when would they start. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied he would need to go through the PARTF process and find out when the money would be distributed as well as get with Kate B. Reynolds to see when they would relinquish those funds. Councilman Smith asked why Kate B. Reynolds had not given those funds yet. He replied there were some stipulations in the grant that they wanted to wait for the PARTF grant for some reason and once they heard from PARTF then they could ask for those funds from them.

Councilman Smith said when they find out and if they get the money, he would like to see this project started pronto; he did not think they needed to put it off any longer. It has been put off for two years and it's time for them to do something.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee agreed and said he believed the goal was to get it up and going for the next season. He said they had discussed meeting again with the community once this was done to let them know what was going on. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said his plan was to receive good news on Friday and then invite the community to a celebration (hotdogs or ice cream) to bring people out and go over the project again to show them where they were headed.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker stated the department has received a lot of calls and had done a lot of work. The grass is growing very fast and they were trying to get caught up.

He reported they received a new mosquito fogger; it needs to be calibrated but it should go into service tomorrow night. It will give them two mosquito machines back out which was a perfect time with the amount of rain they've had.

Public Works Director Chalker said they met with some engineers, contractors and school officials at Manning School today. They've had some light to moderate flooding on Virginia Avenue since they finished some of the grading at Manning School. They are monitoring that situation very closely and they have asked them to take a second look at some of their engineering as provided in their plans. Nick Rightmyer is following that process. They hope to hear back from them quickly and once they get the engineering numbers back and can verify if there was an error or take a different look at the water figures, they can try to figure out a solution to the flood waters on Virginia Avenue.

Fire

Fire Chief Coggins reported the Fire Department responded to 191 calls of service throughout the month of July. Firefighters were engaged in 471 man-hours of training. The inspections division conducted 35 fire inspections and completed 3 plan reviews.

He announced the department was fully staffed at this time. New members of the department toured the Roanoke Rapids dam this past month and members of the department were working on the fire safety house to get it ready for fire prevention month. He reported they had a meeting recently with the Police Department, Halifax County EMS, Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad and Public Works to look for ways to better serve the public in emergency situations.

Chief Coggins said the department took part in a back to school event at First Baptist Church located on Webb Hill. They installed 1 child safety seat this past month. They held the 4th Annual Safety Fair at Kirkwood Adams last Friday which was successful and enjoyed by all who attended.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle presented her monthly report. She said she hoped most of them had been to 1026 Roanoke Avenue this summer. They were continuing to

some work there, mainly for the public art sculpture going in on the double brick wall towards the back of the space. They were awarded a \$2,000 Halifax County Arts Council grant to help facilitate that piece. It will be a metal sculpture that incorporates items from the river, the rail and the textile mills and there will be water feature on some of the metal. Public Works has been instrumental as they have been throughout the whole project and hopes it will be complete in a few weeks. She announced they would be hosting a project appreciation event in the space on September 27th and invited them all to attend.

She reported the wayfinding signage program encroachment agreement for the thirteen signs was approved from NC DOT last week. Now they can move forward with the complete order and fabrication of the signs. She was waiting to hear back from Express Signs on the lead time, hopefully she will hear back in the next day or so where she can get a better idea of when those signs would be installed throughout the city.

Main Street Director Caudle reported that Joy J's Shoppe located at 935 Roanoke Avenue announced last month they would be closing; their last day will be this Thursday. They were hoping to sell the property which can be a difficult thing, but they were fortunate that they have now leased it so there will be a new retail business going in that location in October. Ideally, they still would like to sell the property and will continue to work on that.

She announced the old Shell Furniture location in the 900 block of Roanoke Avenue has sold to Greg Edwards and he hopes to re-open Shell Furniture in some form.

Other Business/Council Comments

Mayor Doughtie stated before going into Closed Session, he wanted to say the meeting has had a lot of variety tonight. It started off celebrating the success of a lot of children that not only involved the children, but the parents, grandparents and adults so a lot of positive impact on those young people. He said the coaches looked like they enjoyed it as much as the children did. He stated they had a lot of business people at the meeting tonight and recognized the former mayor, Gene Minton, who was also a business person. They had an elected official, Halifax County Commission Chairman Vernon Bryant. Two individuals were here representing NCDOT and he thought they gave Council some good information to help them make a decision tonight. He stated they have always had a good relationship with NCDOT and in talking with people in our community, we feel being in eastern NC, we get overlooked a little bit in regard to roads and capital improvements. He said they should be excited that they are looking to spend a large amount of taxpayer money to hopefully benefit our community. They

heard from Mrs. Caudle that they weren't going to have an empty building where one business was going out, another one was going in. He thinks it is exciting about Shell Furniture. With the exception of Halifax Farmers, it was the oldest business on Roanoke Avenue and had been there for about 100 years. It was sad to see it close so he was glad to see it reopen in some kind of form of what Shell Furniture was. It will be nice to see the paper come off and lights on in the building.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to go into Closed Session to discuss personnel matters as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6) and to take a five minute recess.

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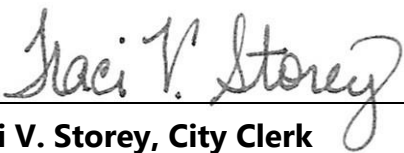
Minute Book Pages 19184 - 19187 contain Minutes and General Account of a Closed Session which have been sealed until such time as public inspection of those minutes would not frustrate the purpose of the Closed Session.

Adjournment

City Council returned to Open Session and Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order.

City Council discussed a personnel matter in closed session. No action was taken.

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: September 4, 2018