



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, January 15, 2019 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
Charles Vaught, Police Captain
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
Doug Love, Assistant Public Works Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Chuck Hasty, Police Chief
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

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, a motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for January 15, 2019 as presented.

Public Comment (Scheduled)

Elijah Lee

Elijah Lee, a 11 year old 5th grade student at KIPP GCP said last year he spoke before Council to request permission for his first 2018 Child Abuse Awareness March. He is returning this year to ask for their support in 2019. He said he would like to hold the 2nd Annual Child Abuse Awareness March on March 2, 2019 at Centennial Park in Roanoke Rapids, NC from 1 – 2 p.m. He reported the park has been reserved and paid for and he has received a permit from Chief Hasty. Last year they had over 200 people in attendance, but this year they are working very hard to double that number. He said they really want to show children they are loved and that they hear them. He asked for City Council's support and invited them to attend the event and bring a family member or friend out. He said they want family and friends to talk about this issue at home. He encouraged those that attend to make signs of support; signs that call for an end to violence; signs that tell children they are loved and will be protected.

He explained why the march was so important to him. He had a friend that experienced abuse first hand. That harsh act not only changed that one girl's life, but that environment around her. Remember when one falls, we all fall; when one rises, we all rise. He would like to be the one who rises for himself and others. Often adults ignore or discount the voices of children, but he was here tonight to let everyone know that his generation will stand up for what they believe is right. He believes every child should have the right to feel safe in their homes; that every child should have the right to be loved by their parent or guardian; that every child should have the right to wake up every morning and not feel hungry; every child should have the right to not experience a traumatic thing called abuse. There are many forms of abuse: physical, verbal, mental, emotional and sexual abuse. He said words do hurt; it is not okay for anyone to call a young person dumb, stupid or that they are no good, they were a mistake, they hate them, wish they never would have had them or they were keeping them for the money or they wish they would die. He said suicide unfortunately is real in the community. Young people are turning to suicide as a way to relieve their pain. He said a difficult subject for him to talk about was sexual abuse, but it is real. He referred to Maya Angelou for his message. At age 7 she was sexually abused by a sick man who was her mother's boyfriend. Maya was brave and testified against him. The man spent one day in jail and was released. He was then killed. Maya thought her words killed that man so she became silent and would not talk for five years. Maya was able to turn her pain around through reading, but not every child would do that. Dr. Angelou's pain silenced her. So today he speaks loudly for Dr. Angelou as a 7 year old girl in pain, he speaks loudly for that child who is at home alone scared and afraid, he speaks loudly for those children whose mother and father have failed them; he speaks loudly for that child in foster care, he speaks loudly for that child who is

suffocating from their pain. Loudly, he said, we must take a stand, we must protect our children. Today they are unfortunately not just talking about protection at home, but the reality is that parents have to teach them about gun violence and bullying. Violence is everywhere in our community today. It is in our homes, schools, places of worship, grocery stores, movie theaters, clubs, streets and everywhere. We are naive to think violence does not occur in our community. If your life is not directly impacted by violence, you are a member of a greater society or community. He said it was sad as a young child he could easily name at least three school shootings: Columbine, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook and Parkland, Florida and many more. Research on why school shootings occur was that shooters were motivated due to being bullied, family issues or mental health issues. This means as a community, we need to help our youth, we need to provide counseling, listen to young people, check their home situation, etc. At times he gets frustrated with kids acting up in school; it makes learning difficult and can set the class back. But the truth is, the best place for that troubled child is to be in school. We cannot give up on them. Recently he learned about adverse childhood experiences. Trauma during childhood affects a person for the rest of their life. These affects can be mentally, physically and emotionally harmful. So help me – be the one who rises so we can all rise once again.

Mayor Doughtie stated Elijah should be grateful to his mother because although he was born with some gifts, it is obvious that his mother has nurtured those gifts. It was sad that all the things he said were true about violence happening in so many places. It was very sad that things were happening in our community and across the nation that are very difficult to deal with. Sometimes people think the things they do, don't make a difference, but if they don't do something it only continues to get worse. He thanked him for coming and wished him the best with his endeavor.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee added that he had the City Council's support.

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Michael Green

Mr. Green, Chairman of the Canal Museum Advisory Committee presented the activity report for the Roanoke Canal Museum for the months of September – December 2018.

Attendance at the Museum

- September - 301, October – 536, November – 221 and December – 249 for a total of 1307 people.

Bicycle Loan Program

- September - 44, October – 33, November – 20 and December – 13 for a total of 110 people who used the bicycles.

He announced the following upcoming events:

- Night at the Museum on January 25th at 5:30 p.m. (*NC Wildlife Resource Officers to talk about wildlife found along the trail followed by crafts and pizza for the children*).
- Preschool Story Time on January 30th at 10:30 a.m.
- Winter Hike on February 18th at 9 a.m.
- Roanoke Canal Half Marathon/8K Race on March 30th starting at 8 a.m.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the January 8, 2019 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as written.

Committee Appointments/Reappointments

Planning Board/Board of Adjustment

City Clerk Storey reported the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board/Board of Adjustment has several vacancies, one of which is an “In-town” seat. Kathryn Strickland submitted an application previously, but at that time there were no vacancies for an “In-town” seat. She contacted Ms. Strickland and she is still interested in serving on the board. Council took a ballot vote earlier and Ms. Strickland received a 4-1 vote to be appointed.

She informed City Council Ms. Strickland would be filling a seat in which the term expires June 1, 2019 and would have to come back before them in a month or so to request reappointment. She recommended City Council consider a motion to appoint Kathryn Strickland to the Planning Board/Board of Adjustment with her term expiring June 1, 2022, which would be the expiration date if it came back to Council.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to appoint Kathryn Strickland to the Planning Board/Board of Adjustment with the term expiring June 1, 2022.

New Business

Presentation and Acceptance of FY 2017-2018 Audit Report

Gregory Redman, CPA presented the audit report and financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2018. He highlighted a few of the pages of the 84 page report.

Page 1-3: Independent Auditors Report. These three pages summarize what the audit is and what they did. It was an unmodified opinion which means there were no modifications, no weaknesses, no findings or recommendations. Before the technical terms came from GASB, it was called a clean audit.

Page 14: Balance Sheet as of June 30, 2018. General Fund - Cash and cash equivalents \$3.5M. Total Fund Balance: \$4.4M and undesignated portion is \$3.1M which is the budgeted amount that can be spent.

Page 16: Revenues and Expenses for the year. General Fund – Total Revenues \$14.7M. Total Expenses: \$15.2M. There was a deficit of \$561,000. The debt service payment is \$1.5M, but without that debt payment, the City's General Fund made almost \$1M in operations. Not many cities make that kind money on the general fund. He attributes that with the declining revenues from the State to cutting costs which is the management and board effort. General Fund Balance is \$4.4M.

Page 49: Pension/Retirement Fund. The actuarial study calculated \$1.59M of what City's retirees will receive over the years. That is not the number the City would have to pay out because they make the monthly payments to the NC Retirement System.

Page 51: Law Enforcement Officers' Separation Allowance is \$1.39M. Again, that payment is made monthly.

Page 53: Total OPEB Liability (new accounting standards says they had to book the post-retirement health insurance benefits). The City pays health insurance for its employees after they retire until age 65. The actuarial evaluation for that number which is \$7.3M. That number has been booked as a liability for this year.

Page 47: Financial Statement. Notes payable balance as of June 30, 2018 is \$1.6M and the tax increment financing/special revenue bonds, which has been refinanced, total \$14.8M.

Page 54 – 61: Detail of Revenues and Expenses from page 16 by Department. In comparison of the budget, they have to make sure the City did not over expend their budget in any category or any department, and the City did not; that would be a violation of State statutes. Which is part of the no findings he was talking about.

Page 76: Letter concerning internal control of the City. They look at the internal control processes, segregation of duties and there were no findings, no material weaknesses or recommendations from them. Many of the employees have been with the City for a while and know their jobs.

Page 78: Compliance for Major State Programs Letter. The City received over \$500,000 in State funds so that requires the City has to have a State Single Audit which means they have to look at details of the grants the City receives. Again, the report is unmodified so there were no findings.

Page 75: Property Taxes. Total valuation and property tax collections. The total taxes collected were \$7.3M with a 98.86% collection rate, which is as high as he has seen.

He said yes there was a deficit, the City needs to continue to work on that. Try to cut costs, revenues they don't know - maybe the 1-cent sales tax increase will help, but the debt payment is there. Internal control wise, they did not see any material weaknesses and no findings.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the audit report for the year ending June 30, 2018.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer stated he feels the City has a community pride issue. It is reflected in the way the citizens do not take care of their surroundings. Littered roadways, ditches filled with beverage bottles, junk cars in alleys and yards, and dump sites demonstrates a lack of pride.

He said not only does the trash we leave behind, such as plastic bags and plastic rings, trash up the place we call home, but those things can entrap and endanger pets and wildlife. In parts of Roanoke Rapids, discarded tires, cans, bottles, wrappers, plastic bags and household trash can all be seen on the streets and in the yards.

He said littering and dumping are illegal. The City does have ordinances to deal with these issues, but honestly, we shouldn't have to. People should have enough pride in their community not to impose on others and create a situation that is unsightly and possibly unsafe. However, it is disheartening that it has to be a law to regulate what ought to be common sense. A lot of our laws are based on common sense, which, unfortunately, seems to be less and less common. Why should we have to have laws to tell us not to litter and destroy our own environment and the appearance of where we live? Protecting and preserving the beauty of where we live and call home should just come naturally. Sadly, however, it does not.

City Manager Scherer stated littering is a senseless crime. It takes very little effort to simply dispose of waste in a trash can or dumpster. Littering goes beyond lazy. It is

senseless and shows a total disregard for the entire community.

He said many of our ordinances are created and adopted because people refuse to show consideration for others. This is why there are ordinances that require people to maintain their yards, require certain minimum standards for vehicles kept on property and even to clean up after their dog has done his business in someone's yard or on the street. In an ideal world, there would be no need for any of these laws, but unfortunately, our elected officials must craft laws and ordinances to deal with those who don't show consideration for others. If a yard is full of grass and weeds, it drags down the neighboring property's value. If someone blocks a sidewalk, it makes it difficult for others to use it. The time, effort and tax dollars that the city administration puts into code enforcement, litter cleanup and junk cars prosecution is tremendous and could so much be better utilized in other ways.

City Manager Scherer expressed that everyone can play a role in keeping Roanoke Rapids' appearance welcoming, clean and vibrant. Simple things like not littering and taking care of your property can make a big difference as it shows consideration for others and our community. It's time for the community to show some pride in itself. If you don't take some pride in where you live and work, why would you expect anyone else to come here and live or open a business?

Mayor Doughtie said that was well stated and believed City Manager Scherer said some words that many people feel within the community. It has a real effect on the community when people come in and see the ditches full of plastic bags, tires, etc. He thanked him for making those comments.

Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Etheridge gave the following financial report for the month of December. She reported during the month, the Finance Department issued 62 purchase orders, wrote 511 payroll checks, processed 161 direct deposit vouchers and 235 accounts payable checks. She noted during the month of December, Finance staff processed both longevity and Christmas bonuses for City employees.

After review of the operating statement, the month of December shows the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$8,199,208. The percentage of actual monies collected of adopted budgeted figures total 45.4%. Year to date expenditures totaled \$8,487,600. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures total 47.0%. After the month of December, 50.0% of the budget year has been completed. As a result, year to date expenditures exceeded revenues by (\$288,392.16).

She said during the month of December, the City received the following revenues: Utility Franchise Taxes, Powell Bill Funding (Second and final allocation for 18-19), Ad Valorem and Solid Waste Taxes, Sales & Use Taxes for the service month of October and Motor Vehicle Tax Collections (Two months received in December).

Finance Director Etheridge stated they are continuing to watch expenditures carefully as December closes with a higher than usual expenditure month. Historically for the City, employee benefit payments are processed in the month of December.

Councilman Smith asked if this was a normal deficit for December. She replied the City always has a deficit in December, but it is lower than last year. Last year it was (\$505,000).

Mayor Doughtie added the City should receive a good amount of property tax next time. He asked if sales & use tax was typically higher for November and December collection months due to the holiday season. Finance Director Etheridge replied yes, although this report reflects collection of October sales & use tax revenue.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the City was projecting to be \$300,000 better than the year before. Finance Director Etheridge stated they could look at it that way, but they were trying to manage expenditures very carefully as they go into the second half of the year with the mid-year review.

Mayor Doughtie asked of the (\$280,000) versus the (\$500,000) if everything was equal, wouldn't some of that be showing up due to the new debt payment. She said yes, the City has made two payments. City Manager Scherer added the City's spending is also down 4% from last year.

Departmental Reports

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney presented the December report. She reported the department was currently advertising for Code Enforcement Officer. They just closed out the Firefighter Applicant Pool, the Deputy Chief position and the Assistant Chief of Operations for the Fire Department. Interviews for those positions and the testing for the Firefighter Applicant Pool will take place shortly. For Police Officers, they had 4 openings as of the last Council meeting. They had 1 that started work last week. They still have 3 openings, but they have 2 people that are in the hiring process at this time.

She said they held the BARC Employee Christmas Luncheon and Service Awards on December 19th. She thanked City Council on behalf of the City employees for budgeting the Thanksgiving gift cards, the Christmas bonuses and for the door prizes

for the BARC Christmas Luncheon. She stated she knows times have been tight the past few years, but she appreciates them adding these things to the budget so at least they know they have these things to give the employees for their hard work.

Police

Police Captain Charles Vaught presented the department's December report. He stated Chief Hasty was at the Chiefs Association Conference in Cherokee. He reported the new police vehicle has arrived which a marked K-9 SUV being utilized by Officer Cross. The other vehicles have been ordered and they are waiting for them to be shipped to Roanoke Rapids to the vendor. When they arrive, they will still need to be up fitted with the equipment. It is an estimated 10-week turnaround time once they get them.

He also reported the ventilation equipment for the evidence room has been installed and is working well. Evidence tracking equipment and training has been ordered and they are in the process of scheduling a training date to learn how to use that equipment. The new Tasers are in and staff has started training. There was a class last Thursday and there will be a class this Thursday and the following Thursday. The department has hired one person as a police cadet on January 10th and he started BLET yesterday. They have one certified person that is in the final stages of the hiring process and hope to have him working soon. The recent BLET graduates will be on the road starting their training the end of the month.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky presented the report for December. She reported the demolition of the former Social Security building has begun and noted that the site plans for the Dollar General are still under review. They are awaiting final comments from NCDOT about the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) study and reports that may call for possible changes to be made to those plans in order to move forward. She stated the demolition of the current building has been authorized, but no other site work is permissible yet until they have made a final decision.

She said Rooney Ridge Apartments at the corner of Becker Drive and Hunting Ridge Road have begun their site work. The department has received some calls and concerns, but they have investigated those and found everything was in compliance with the site development plans.

Planning & Development Director Lasky said the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments is developing another Brownfields application to the EPA. At least one site in Roanoke Rapids is on their list which is the WestPoint Stevens Mill site. Other potential sites within that area are also being considered. That application is due

January 31st to the EPA which is part of the government shutdown. She has been assisting the COG with that application.

She reported they have seen an increase in some of the building permit values primarily due to the hospital's boiler and generator replacement project which brought in some significant revenues. She said vehicles and complaints on housing are moving forward. The department had some relatively good success with vehicles being moved and she attributes that to staff working with citizens to remove them and describing the ways in which a car is not compliant thus promoting some public education.

She also informed Council that the City's Building Inspector Brian Duhadaway is in the hospital awaiting gallbladder surgery in the next couple of days. She has reached out to the Town of Weldon and Halifax County where the City has interlocal agreements to help with substitute inspector services. She has gotten good reception from both jurisdictions to help out during this time.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon was absent. A written report was submitted to Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee noted that it appears the Chaloner Recreation Center was still on target for opening Memorial Day. City Manager Scherer replied yes it was, although the weather was slowing the project down a little bit they still anticipate construction will be completed by then.

Public Works

Assistant Public Works Director Doug Love gave the report for the month of December. He reported during the month of December, the department received 158 calls for service, 25 calls were concerning limbs, junk and loose materials, 80 calls were for property/building maintenance, 19 calls were for some type of street maintenance, 26 calls were for solid waste related issues and 8 calls for lot/grass issues.

He said the department was finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel on leaf season. As those trucks come off leaf collection, he was beginning to send some of the crews to pick up trash from the streets, alleys and right of ways.

Fire

Fire Chief Patrick presented the report for December. He reported the department responded to 167 calls of service throughout the month with an average response time of 5 minutes. One of the most important calls was a CPR save the department

had. He plans to recognize those firefighters in the near future. He was happy to report the victim they resuscitated has received a pacemaker and is out and about today.

He stated when the rainy weather breaks the department plans to get back on the shed project and finish it. He and several other firefighters worked hard on a grant application for a new smoke house. The one they currently have is about 20-30 years old and they have redone it about three times.

He said firefighters were engaged in 414.0 man-hours of training throughout the month of December. Some of the training was EMT/EMS T.S.O.P.S. The Fire Marshal's Office conducted 15 inspections and 3 plan reviews. He announced the Fireman's Club along with New Life Church of Christ sponsored three families during the Christmas holidays. They also assisted the Police Department with their Christmas for the Kids program.

Fire Chief Patrick announced the Fire Department will be hosting an ISO Class on February 9th. He invited City Council to attend. He believed the class would enlighten some people on what the Fire Department does and why they have to have certain things. The State comes in and grades them. He informed them the ISO rating sets the premiums for residential, commercial and industrial insurance. He reported the Roanoke Rapids Fire Department's rating is currently a 4. He said 2008 was the last time they were graded and at that time the department dropped from a 5 to a 4. He was not sure what they would get this time, but hoped they would remain the same. One of his goals as Fire Chief is in the next 6-8 years is to drop from at least one more point, if not two points. He said two points may be difficult, but dropping one was doable. After his review of the report from last time, some things have gone up and others have gone down. The inspector has told him they plan to come in November or December. He said they plan to hold the class at the Fireman's Clubhouse, but if they get a crowd it could be moved to the Lloyd Andrews building or across the street at the Jo Story Senior Center. The class will be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Someone from the State Fire Marshal's Office will be teaching the class. He noted a rating below a 4 or 5 does not affect residential insurance rates, but it can benefit industrial and commercial rates.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee clarified that low was good and asked how high can the rating go. Fire Chief Patrick replied it goes as high as a 9; a lot of volunteer departments are a 9 which means they are basically not certified. He said the average across the country and state is in the 5 – 6 range. He said if you are a 1, you are an elite status; he believes Rocky Mount is a 2.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle presented her monthly report. She reported the annual NC Main Street assessment was submitted in early January. It is a required annual report that the NC Department of Commerce uses to determine which Main Street programs throughout the State need additional organizational assistance, which ones have established best practices and out of those which ones would be eligible for National Main Street Accreditation. The Roanoke Rapids Main Street program has been nationally accredited since 2015 and she anticipates within the next few months to hear back from the State with a recommendation that the program be nationally accredited again. She will update Council once she hears from them.

Public Works has worked with a third party since December on the first phase of installation of all thirteen signs of the Wayfinding Signage project throughout the city. They dug six and poured concrete before Christmas and dug the remaining seven last week. With the structural engineer's requirement for a 28-day minimum cure time, they were looking at very late January or first week in February to install the signs. The first six are ready to go, but what they do not want to do is put up directional signage for the public and stop halfway through the program. She will let Council know once they complete the final phase of installation. They will start from the center of the city and work their way out.

Main Street Director Caudle announced NCDOT has a project start date of March 15th for the Avenue resurfacing project. They still anticipate the work to take 3-4 weeks to complete. She has already started communication with affected property and business owners and will continue to do that throughout the entire project. There have been a couple of local media articles giving information to the general public and will continue to do that piece as well. The City is intimately involved with NCDOT on this project so they are staying informed as they progress.

She reported the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District will be replacing a water line in the back alley of the even numbered buildings in the 1000 block of Roanoke Avenue. This includes City Hall. It may impact some water service the week of January 21st. According to Dan Brown, it would be minimal and they intend to fully repair the alley before the resurfacing project.

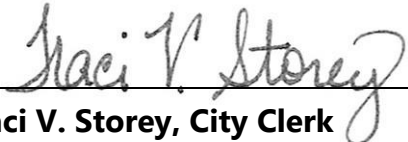
She announced Spartan Elite Gym and Stephens Outlet have completed their business swap and are both open in their new locations. Several new businesses planning to open. A gym at the corner of 10th Street and Roanoke Avenue, a new & used furniture store at 1028 Roanoke Avenue and a spa going in a few stores down from Oscar's Restaurant.

She said the Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce is organizing a few ribbon cuttings. Hannah's Closet at 1034 Roanoke Avenue on Friday, January 18th at 5 p.m. followed by a jewelry preview from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. They will hold a Grand Opening during regular business hours the next day, Saturday, January 19th. The Counsel Rye Lodge (log cabin) located at 521 Roanoke Avenue will have a ribbon cutting at 5:15 p.m. followed by an After Hours on Wednesday, January 23rd.

Main Street Director Caudle reminded Council the Main Street's regular board meetings are held every third Tuesday at 3 p.m. She announced Councilman Smith joined them at today's meeting and the next meeting will be February 19th. She encouraged any of City Council or citizens to attend. Currently, the Main Street Annual Meeting and Dinner is still scheduled for January 31st at 6 p.m. but the Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce is also holding their annual dinner the same night. At their meeting earlier, board members discussed possibly changing that date. She will inform them if the date is changed.

Other Business/Council Comments
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There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: February 5, 2019