



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, October 3, 2023, 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) **Council Members**  
 Wayne Smith)  
 Rex Stainback)
- Kelly Traynham, City Manager  
 Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney  
 Traci Storey, City Clerk  
 Carmen Johnson, Finance Director  
 Shane Guyant, Police Chief  
 John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director  
 Jason Patrick, Fire Chief  
 David Wise, Planning & Development Director  
 Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

- Absent:** Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director  
 Tony Hall, Main Street Development Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order. He provided an invocation and then the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members if there were any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening. There being no conflicts, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith, and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda as presented.

## Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, and unanimously carried to approve the September 13, 2023, Special City Council Meeting and September 19, 2023 Regular City Council Meeting minutes as drafted.

**Public Hearing**

**Conditional Zoning District Rezoning (Terry Wethington/Ample Storage) from R-3 to B-4 Conditional Zoning District**

City Manager Traynham stated in the traditional sense when they have talked about rezoning, they have said they could not rezone based on a particular land use. She explained that now they can under Chapter 160D so this is going to sound a little different. The requested zoning district is B-4 but it is to enable a specific site for a particular use. Previously, they would have had a rezoning then a special use permit process simultaneously. This merges those two efforts. This is the City’s first one and tonight they will be considering the zoning district that would allow the specific use that will be presented. If there are any substantial changes, if it were approved, it would have to come back before City Council.

Planning & Development Director Wise presented and summarized the following staff report:

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Members of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

From: David Wise, Planning Director

Re: **B-4 Conditional Zoning District Rezoning Request (map attached) – Amendment to the Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map to rezone Halifax Co. Parcel 0911569 (a 17.84 ± acre property) from R-3 Residential Zoning District to a B-4 Conditional Zoning District. The property is adjacent to one of City of Roanoke Rapids Street rights-of-way located on W. Becker Drive.**

Date: October 3, 2023

**Summary Overview**

<i>Subject Property</i>	<i>17.84 acres with 60 +/- feet of frontage located along W. Becker Drive.</i>
<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Rezone from R-3 Residential District to a B-4 Conditional Zoning District</i>
<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Terry Wethington – Ample Storage Representative</i>
<i>Property Owner</i>	<i>M/K Properties, LLC – Contact: W.E. Murphrey</i>
<i>Present Use</i>	<i>Undeveloped land</i>
<i>Proposed Use</i>	<i>Specific Use – Indoor climate-controlled building storage facility</i>
<i>Staff Recommendation</i>	<i>Approve.</i>

WHEN EVALUATING A B-4 CONDITIONAL DISTRICT REZONING REQUEST, ONLY SPECIFIC PERMISSIBLE USES WILL BE CONSIDERED THROUGH A NEGOTIATED PROCESS BETWEEN THE APPLICANT AND CITY COUNCIL INTO A MASTER PLAN FOR THE SUBJECT PROPERTY. IF ANY MINOR CHANGES TO MASTER PLAN CAN BE

EXECUTED ADMINISTRATIVELY; HOWEVER, ANY MAJOR CHANGES FROM THE MASTER PLAN WOULD REQUIRE THAT THE APPLICANT COME BACK BEFORE CITY COUNCIL TO AMEND THE ORIGINAL MASTER PLAN.

CONSIDER IMPACTS ON/FROM:

- POTENTIAL USES
- NEIGHBORS
- GENERAL PUBLIC
- TRAFFIC
- UTILITIES
- NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER
- SCHOOLS

OMIT FROM CONSIDERATION:

- ETHNICITY
- RELIGION
- INCOME
- RENT OR OWN



(Fig 1. Aerial Image of Subject Property)

**Analysis and Detail:**

**1. Applicant and Property Owner**

The property owner is M/K Properties, Inc, 610 Lankashire Road, Winston Salem, NC 27016; (252) 904-0383. According to the application and Halifax County tax listing, the property owner is M/K Properties, LLC a North Carolina Limited Liability Company c/o WE Murphy. The applicant is Terry Wethington P.O. Box 608 Smithfield, NC 27577.

*(Application for Rezoning and Supplemental Information Attached)*

**2. Location/Area Description**

The site proposed for rezoning is located on the Northwestern side of W. Becker Drive and adjacent to River Town Homes Apartments. Becker Self Storage is located on W. Becker Drive.

The property requested for a B-4 conditional district rezoning is 17.84 acres with 60 +/- feet of frontage along W. Becker Drive. The property is undeveloped with trees or shrubbery throughout the property. The primary development pattern(s) existing along this portion of W. Becker Drive consists of various residential zoning districts, business zoning districts and industrial zoning districts in the immediate vicinity of subject property.

*(See Figure 1: Aerial Photo)*

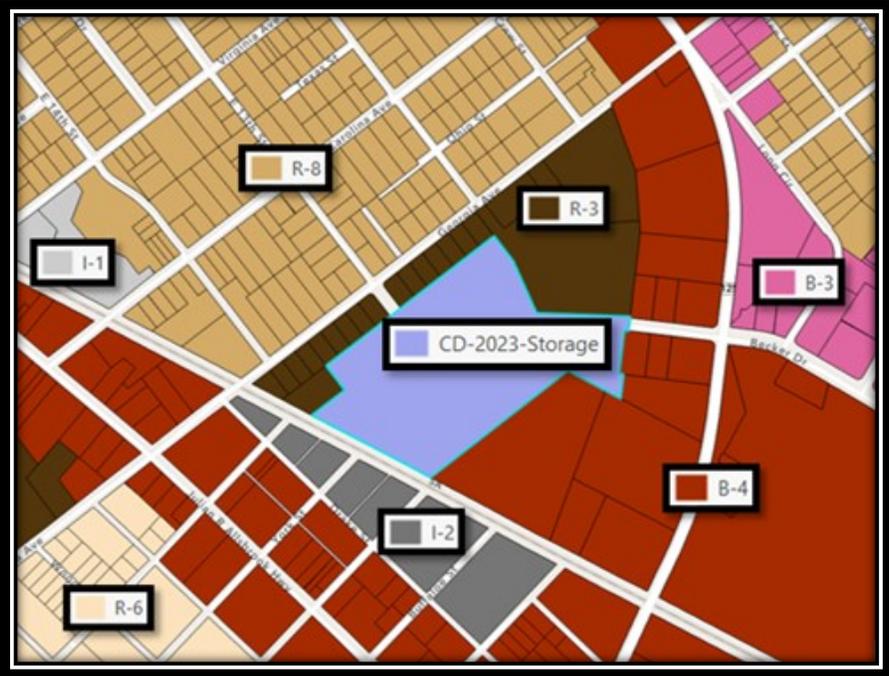
**3. Existing and Proposed Zoning**

The Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map identifies the existing zoning classifications of the lot being considered for rezoning as R-3 Residential Zoning District. The proposed zoning request is B-4 Conditional Zoning District. (See Fig.3 Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map.)

(Fig 2. City of Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map: Adopted June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017.) Subject property is outlined in teal and all zoning districts are shown in the immediate vicinity of subject property.)



(Fig 3. Proposed Conditional Zoning District amendment illustrated as CD-2023-Storage. All zoning districts are shown in the immediate vicinity of subject property.)



The following provides general descriptions of the existing and proposed zoning districts.

**(Current zoning) R-3 Residential:** Designed to accommodate a mixture of residential uses, excluding single-family homes, and uses that fall primarily within the 1,000 Residential classification in the Table of Permissible Uses (Section 1.210 Duplexes and Section 1.220 Two-family conversions.)

**(Requested zoning) B-4 Conditional Zoning District:** *Designed to accommodate a wide range of commercial activities, with larger scale developments attracting customers within a region is a common feature. Uses that fall primarily in the within the 10.000 classification in the Table of Permissible Uses (Storage & Parking). Section 10.210: All storage within completely controlled structure, including mini storage. The proposed specific use (secured indoor climate-controlled storage facility) falls under the previously noted section.*

The Table of Permissible Uses states storage facilities are permissible within the following zoning jurisdictions: B-1, B-2, B-3, and B-4. With B-4 zoning being directly adjacent it seemed appropriate for the applicant to request B-4 zoning for the conditional zoning district.

**The following Zoning Districts are in the immediate vicinity of the subject property.**

The uses allowed in each zoning district are identified in Section 151-149 Table of Permitted Uses of the City of Roanoke Rapids Land Use Ordinance. **(Ordinance Excerpts Attached)**

**B-3 Zoning District:** *Is designed to accommodate a mixture of residential uses, excluding single-family residential dwellings, and uses that fall primarily within the 3.000 classification in the Table of Permissible Uses (office, clerical, research, services, etc.) This district will also generally constitute a transition or buffer zones between major arterials or more intensively developed commercial areas and residential districts.*

**B-4 Zoning District:** *Is designed to accommodate a wide range of commercial activities, with larger scale developments attracting customers within the region a common feature.*

**R-3 Zoning District:** *Is designed to accommodate two-family residences (duplex) and multi-family dwelling units (apartments, townhomes).*

**R-6 Zoning District:** *These districts are designed and intended to secure, for the person who resides there a comfortable, healthy, safe, and pleasant environment in which to live, sheltered from incompatible and disruptive activities that properly belong in nonresidential districts. Is designed to accommodate single family and two-family dwelling units.*

**R-8 Zoning District:** *Is designed to accommodate single family dwelling units and differ primarily in the density allowed as determined by the minimum lot size requirements set forth in Section 151-181.*

**I-1 Zoning District:** *Is established primarily to accommodate enterprise engaged in the manufacturing, processing, creating, repairing, renovating, painting, cleaning, or assembling of goods, merchandise, or equipment: The I-1 zoning district permits a less heavy (light) use than the I-2 zoning district (heavy) use.*

**I-2 Zoning District:** *Is established primarily to accommodate enterprises engaged in the manufacturing, processing, creating, repairing, renovating, painting, cleaning, or assembling of goods, merchandise, or equipment: The I-2 zoning districts permits a more (heavy) use than the I-1 zoning district (light) use.*

**ANY PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND SITE PLANS ARE EVALUATED BY CITY STAFF AND THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE TO ENSURE A PROPER DESIGN. THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE INCLUDES THE SANITARY DISTRICT, NCDOT, PUBLIC WORKS, NC DOMINION ENERGY, FIRE DEPARTMENT AND CODE ENFORCEMENT.**

#### **4. Traffic Considerations**

All traffic considerations will be evaluated by The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) regulates placement of access and driveway permitting for properties on state roads. NCDOT Highway Division 4, District 1 Engineer will review any proposed development plans and would be responsible for approving W. Becker Drive.

## 5. Utility Considerations

There are no specific utility considerations that should negatively impact this property, at the present time. The area is served by Dominion Energy and the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District. All connections, extensions and responsibilities for services will be the responsibility of the developer.

## 6. Other Considerations

A preliminary site plan was distributed to the development review committee on Wednesday, August 16, 2023. The comments received are as follows: 1. Scott Bumgarner, of Mack Gay Associates

stated, “Nothing from a storm water perspective stands out.” Brent Hamill, Coordinator Electric Design from Dominion Energy stated he “did not see any red flags from his standpoint. However, Dominion would like to be involved early in the process when they begin their electrical layout for the site. Dominion will extend primarily to the site so the applicant, Terry Wethington, will need to work out the location and provide that to Dominion Energy. Perry Keeter of NCDOT did not see any issues. City of Roanoke Rapids Fire Marshal, Kenneth Hollowell stated “that a fire hydrant would need to be placed on site”. Public Works Director Larry Chalker had no comments.

## 7. Comprehensive Development Plan

The property is located inside City Limits and within the Planning & Zoning Jurisdiction. The following implementing strategies may be considered from the City of Roanoke Rapids Comprehensive Plan, adopted by City Council on June 17, 2014:

***I.1** Support infill development. Infill development is development or redevelopment of land that has been bypassed, remained vacant, undervalued and/or is underused as a result of the continuing urban development process. Generally, the areas and/or sites are not particularly of prime quality; however, they are usually served by or are readily accessible to the infrastructure (services and facilities). Use of such lands for new housing and/or other urban development is considered a more desirable alternative than to continue to extend the outer development pattern. The use of infill development, among others, promotes the best use of resources and will tend to have a positive impact upon the tax and other fiscal policies.*

***I.7** Provide effective buffering and/or landscaping where commercial development adjoins existing or planned residential uses.*

***I.18** Utilize the mixed-use areas as a tool to aid in regulating/reducing strip commercialization, stimulate compact development, encourage infill development, reduce trip generation, provide flexible development options, and utilize existing infrastructure.*

***I.20** Encourage developers to utilize thoroughfares and natural topographic features to define the boundaries of a neighborhood and concentrate higher intensity uses at the outer boundaries of the neighborhood.*

***I.32** Protect, enhance, and encourage a high quality of life, image, and cultural amenities as an effective approach to economic development.*

***I.33** Economic development efforts should encourage the revitalization and reuse of currently unused or underutilized structures, sites, and infrastructure in appropriately located areas.*

## 8. Public Response to Notice

The notice of request and City Council review meeting was advertised in the *Daily Herald* on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 and Tuesday, September 26, 2023.

## 9. Staff Recommendation

The proposed request for rezoning subject property is considered reasonable. Reasonableness is determined by considering the size and nature of the tract, any special conditions or factors regarding the area, the consistency of the zoning with the land use plan, the degree of the change in the zoning, the degree it allows uses different from the surrounding area, and the relative benefits and/or detriments for the owner, the neighbors, and the surrounding community.

The Planning and Development Staff recommends in favor of the petitioner's request. The staff finds the proposed rezoning request to be consistent with the area land uses and supported by the Comprehensive Plan.

The courts have established the following factors to determine the reasonableness of spot zoning:

1. ***The size and nature of the tract.*** Planning Staff has determined that the characteristics of the site, and the existing development and zoning surrounding the site, makes the requested zoning change reasonable, and certainly not out of context in this neighborhood. The site has access to utilities and a relatively flat topography.
2. ***Compatibility with existing plans.*** The Land Use Ordinance sets forth the requirements for the various zoning districts. The Comprehensive Plan adopted by the City Council June 17, 2014, proposes, and supports mixed uses in the subject area. Buffering or separation between uses is encouraged to minimize impact and provide a transition between lower and higher density land uses.
3. ***The impact of the zoning decision on the landowner, the immediate neighbors, and the surrounding community.*** Planning staff recognizes that change from a R-3 to B-4 represents a degree of difference, but several existing surrounding commercial and residential lots with many similarities in permissible uses.

## 10. City Council Action

*Following the public hearing, the City Council is requested to make a motion concerning the Statement of Consistency and a motion concerning approval or denial of the rezoning requests.*

*Statement of Consistency – if City Council concurs with the approval of the Statement, the following motion is appropriate.*

**Requested Motion & Vote: Motion to approve and adopt the presented Statement of Consistency to amend the Zoning Map to a B-4 Conditional Zoning Commercial District for Halifax Co. Parcel 0911569, described in the staff report dated October 3, 2023.**

*Final Decision – if City Council concurs with approval of the rezoning request, with any mutually agreed upon site specific conditions if any that were negotiated the following motion is appropriate.*

**Requested Motion & Vote: Motion to approve an amendment to the Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map to change the zoning classification of Halifax Co. Parcel 0911569 to B-4, Conditional Zoning District; (insert the negotiated site-specific conditions here). The property is located W. Becker Drive as described in the staff report dated October 3, 2023.**

Mayor Doughtie opened the public hearing to hear from the applicant and receive public comments.

**Applicant – Mr. Terry Wethington, Ample Storage Representative**

Mr. Wethington stated they were located out of Smithfield, NC and operate in four states: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and some in Florida, but mostly North Carolina. They have 89 facilities and have been in business for 40 years. Storage is all they do. One of their newest facilities is the facility on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. It is their new design and it is full. Roanoke Rapids has been good to them. It is time now for them to grow.

He said this facility they were talking about tonight would be an annex to their existing facility. The existing facility is on 10th street across the railroad track from this property. It will not have a leasing office. Leases will be written from the 10th Street office and then they will carry the tenants around to show them their units. This will minimize the traffic on that dead end street on Becker. Plus, their biggest concern they saw was the assisted senior living facility right across Becker from where they are going which is one of the reasons he filed for conditional zoning. He realized that he had the residential property along Georgia Avenue in the back and the assisted living facility would be most affected by it. By him sending a conditional development plan and his particular use, it allowed him to give them the assurances they needed to know what was going next to them. He has been able to meet with the majority of the landowners on Georgia Avenue and with the manager of the assisted living facility, Rivertown Manor Senior Living.

Planning & Development Director Wise added that Rivertown Manor supported the project with a letter that was submitted to the Planning Board. The Planning Department office has not received any opposition to it.

Mr. Wethington stated he spent a tremendous amount of time reviewing it with the people at Rivertown Manor and with all the landowners he could. He believed there were two owners he did not meet with but they were sent a copy of the development plan and a letter explaining what they intended to do along with his contact information. He did not receive any contact from them.

He distributed copies of a larger scale development plan to City Council members.

City Manager Traynham stated the access would be off W. Becker Drive.

Mr. Wethington presented and reviewed the site plan. He reported the neighbors preferred a natural vegetation buffer. He said when they come into town, they try to

accommodate all the neighbors. The other concern was drainage. He explained the nearby properties being paved (Building supply and car lot), they were experiencing tremendous drainage problems. His plan shows a retention pond on his property which is much larger than needed for the size of the facility. This allows an even wider buffer to the neighboring properties. He said the facility is completely fenced and built in a fortress style. He continued to review the site plan and the building phases. They will have a security apartment on the property. They offer it to the manager of the facility if they do not have a residence here. If they elect not to use it, they offer it to the Sheriff's Department or police officers looking for an apartment. They cut them a deal and it adds to their security. The facility is gated. The gates open at 6 a.m. to only their paid tenants and close at 10 p.m. with the exception of some special commercial tenants. If they have a bonified use they will give them 24-hour passes.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked what feedback, if any, did he receive from the adjacent property owners along Georgia Avenue. Mr. Wethington said he spoke with all but one. He sent the information to the owners he did not speak with and never heard back from them. Everyone received a letter from him and nobody had any objection to it.

City Manager Traynham said in addition, all the adjacent property owners within 100 feet received written correspondence from the City along with the plan and explained the Planning Board meeting and this meeting. The City has gone above and beyond the minimum requirements for the advertisement. Planning & Development Director Wise added they posted notice for the Planning Board meeting and public hearing on the site.

City Manager Traynham explained the driveway entrance would be off W. Becker Drive. The homes on Georgia Avenue would be screened by vegetation, the stormwater detention system then the proposed buildings.

Councilwoman Bryant confirmed that the entire property would be fenced. He replied that was correct and showed the location on the site plan.

Councilman Smith asked if he was going to keep the grass cut in the retention pond because most people in town do not keep it cut. Mr. Wethington replied they have to because NCDEQ is going to monitor it. He added the reason the pond is so big is because there is a tremendous amount of water running down from those two parking lots now and hitting all the yards/houses along Georgia Avenue.

Mayor Doughtie asked if anyone else wished to speak.

With no further comments, Mayor Doughtie closed the public hearing.

Mayor Doughtie asked if this property is rezoned to a B-4 and in the future another business purchases the property to put another type business there, would they have to come before City Council, even if it was a permitted B-4 use. City Manager Traynham replied yes unless it maintains the self-storage facility. It can change ownership, but as long as it remains a self-storage facility they would not have to come back. Hypothetically, if they wanted to change it from a self-storage facility to a gas station, that would have to come back before City Council in a public hearing. Effectively, it is its own zoning district because it is a conditional district. They would prepare a conditional district permit and have it recorded along with the property.

City Manager Traynham asked City Council to consider the Statement of Consistency and then make a final decision on the Conditional Rezoning.

#### **Statement of Consistency with Plans to Amend the Official Zoning Map**

**Reference: Amendment to the Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map to rezone Halifax Co. Parcel 0911569 (a 17.84 ± acre property) from R-3 Residential Zoning District to B-4 Conditional Zoning District. The property is northwest of right-of-way of W. Becker Drive.**

The City Council met on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. and determined that the above-mentioned request is consistent with the Roanoke Rapids Comprehensive Plan, adopted by City Council June 17, 2014, and with the Roanoke Rapids Land Use Ordinance. Comprehensive Development Plan Policies:

#### **ADOPTED BY THE ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY COUNCIL ON THE 3 OF October 2023.**

***I.1** Support infill development. Infill development is development or redevelopment of land that has been bypassed, remained vacant, undervalued and/ or is underused as a result of the continuing urban development process. Generally, the areas and/ or sites are not particularly of prime quality; however, they are usually served by or are readily accessible to the infrastructure (services and facilities). Use of such lands for new housing and/ or other urban development is considered a more desirable alternative than to continue to extend the outer development pattern. The use of infill development, among others, promotes the best use of resources and will tend to have a positive impact upon the tax and other fiscal policies.*

***I.7** Provide effective buffering and/ or landscaping where commercial development adjoins existing or planned residential uses.*

***I.18** Utilize the mixed-use areas as a tool to aid in regulating/ reducing strip commercialization, stimulate compact development, encourage infill development, reduce trip generation, provide flexible development options, and utilize existing infrastructure.*

***I.20** Encourage developers to utilize thoroughfares and natural topographic features to define the boundaries of a neighborhood and concentrate higher intensity uses at the outer boundaries of the neighborhood.*

***I.32** Protect, enhance, and encourage a high quality of life, image, and cultural amenities as an effective approach to economic development.*

***I.33** Economic development efforts should encourage the revitalization and reuse of currently unused or underutilized structures, sites, and infrastructure in appropriately located areas.*

Upon review of the request, it is the City Council determination that the above-mentioned request is reasonable and in the public interest of the City of Roanoke Rapids in that it provides for the organized commercial growth that will help to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Roanoke Rapids.

Adopted: October 3, 2023

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Roanoke Rapids Mayor  
Emery Doughtie

Motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Councilman Smith to amend and adopt the presented Statement of Consistency to amend the zoning map to a B-4 Conditional Zoning Commercial District for Halifax County Parcel 0911569, described in the staff report dated October 3, 2023.

### **Final Decision on Rezoning Request**

Motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee to approve an amendment to the Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map to change the zoning classification of Halifax County Parcel 0911569 to B-4, Conditional Zoning District. The property is located on W. Becker Drive as described in the staff report dated October 3, 2023.

Mr. Wethington stated it was a pleasure dealing with the City's planning staff. They were very professional and responsive to telephone calls and emails. They were very helpful in navigating through the process.

Mayor Doughtie extended appreciation to Mr. Wethington and his company on the style and quality of the building they built previously on the vacant property. Although it may not create a lot of jobs, it does bring the city tax revenue.

Mr. Wethington replied they would be surprised at the jobs. The type of facility they run; they like to look at it as an incubator for businesses. A man that cannot afford a road front business can store his business in a secure storage unit where he can store tools, equipment, or inventory until he can afford to rent a storefront business. There are a lot of people that earn a living out of a storage unit.

<b>Old Business</b>
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### **Update on Proposed Skate Park at Emry Park**

City Manager Traynham spoke on behalf of Parks & Recreation Director Simeon who had to leave the meeting. She said a couple of months ago the City heard from

community members about the Emry Park tennis courts that have been out of use due to unsafe conditions for several years. The proposal was to turn a portion of the courts into a beginner skate park.

She reported the quotes have come in to do that. To remove two of the six tennis courts and install concrete to create a skate park is approximately \$70,000. She stated it would only replace one-third of the tennis courts. The citizen group that City Council heard from before, there are some grants and funding opportunities out there. The request is to seek City Council's support for the project and help facilitate any grant applications. They were not asking City Council for any monies. Before any fundraising efforts or grant applications can go forward, it is important to have City Council's support. There is huge community support for the beginner skate park project. She stated there would still be plenty of space left for any other type of potential recreational uses such as pickle ball courts as discussed during the last meeting. Any fundraising would be specific to the conversion to a skate park.

Mr. Justin Kerr said since the last meeting he has talked with quite a few people in the community and they all seem on board for it. Right now, Emry Park is not safe for use. He's had multiple companies and business owners ask how much he needed and what he wanted. He also had some churches and other folks say they were looking forward to helping them out. He believes they will be able to raise the amount of money that they need in the community, but they will see if they need to apply for any grants. He stated they were looking for City Council's blessing to move forward.

Mr. Kerr added the \$70,000 quote includes fixing the fence, doing the pour over and to get everything started as well as get the lights back on.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said the conversation last time was they were all in agreement except they were looking for other types of activities that could be used in the other area such as pickleball.

City Manager Traynham said Emry Park is a recreational park and could serve a lot of different uses. Right now, they have a clean slate for any other potential uses. She did not see where a skate park area would restrict or prohibit any other uses in the remainder of the property. This is based off a lot of community input and support. They would need to look to the City's recreation plans and see what the community wants there. Unless they look at other funding, the request now is focused on that portion for skating.

Mayor Doughtie stated \$70,000 was quite a bit more than they raised last time. If the group was able to generate that kind of capital, he would certainly think it would

increase chances for additional grant funding especially if it included other activities such as pickleball.

Mayor Doughtie stated it was a consensus from City Council to allow the project to move forward.

## New Business

### **Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau Annual Report**

Ms. Lori Medlin, President and CEO of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Report. She highlighted the following in her presentation:

- The highlight of 2022 was record-breaking visitor spending in Halifax County. They spent \$121.75 million.
- Occupancy Tax funds left in the community rose 7.4% and short-term rentals experienced a surge of over 15.73%.
- Spent \$27.75 million in Lodging; \$39.22 million in Food & Beverage; \$15.61 million in Recreation; \$10.44 million in Retail; \$28.73 million in Transportation.
- Travel & tourism industry directly and indirectly employees over 1,000 people. Total payroll generated by direct employment in the tourism industry in 2022 was \$29.7 million.
- State tax revenue generated in Halifax County totaled \$5.2 million through state sales and excise taxes, and taxes on personal and corporate income.
- \$3.8 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 \$188.24 in taxes in 2022.
- The HCCVB reached an audience of over 341,645,555 in paid and earned media.
- Social Media continues to be a priority for marketing our destination. They have 14,000 followers.
- Top platforms are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter with 1,727,891 impressions and 92,651 engagements.
- Billboards speak to their largest audience. I-95 billboards reached over 162 million impressions last year.
- HCCVB print promotions reached over 66,578,863 combined readers.
- HCCVB hosting a Satellite Media Tour at Weldon Mills Distillery. Wit Tuttle, executive director of VisitNC and Bruce Tyler, co-founder of Weldon Mills

Distillery spoke with stations across the country about the hidden gems and local hotspots in NC and Halifax County. The media tours reached 75.9 million people with 1,125 airings of the content.

- Partnering with Airbnb and VisitNC, they had wonderful social media visits. The social campaign reached an audience of over 1.7 million. They were very interested in the Canal Trail.
- 2022-2023 Roanoke Rapids Occupancy Tax Expenditures:

Roanoke Canal Museum Operations	\$8,000.00
Roanoke Canal Trail Maintenance & Bridge Project	\$53,000.00
Roanoke Rapids Sponsorships	\$16,791.04
Marketing/Advertising	\$62,026.85
Roanoke Rapids Billboards	\$35,532.00
Special Project - Chockoyotte	\$10,000.00
Special Project – Wayfinding	\$20,000.00
Interstate Lighting	<u>\$1,673.01</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$192,275.90</b>

Councilman Smith thanked Ms. Medlin and the board for their support of sporting events and other activities in Roanoke Rapids.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Ms. Medlin if tourism was back. Ms. Medlin replied yes, they were up over the previous year and growing. Hotels are running at a very high occupancy and a very high rate. They have officially recovered. They are a little down in employment and being able to fill all the jobs that are needed. They are doing more with less people. That is the struggle. As far as the dollars being spent here, they are totally recovered. They need more hotel rooms desperately and more places to eat. She commended City Council’s recent action to grow this industry in a big way in Roanoke Rapids.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the hotel in Weldon. Ms. Medlin replied they were having a meeting on October 9<sup>th</sup> to get an update on construction. The site work is being done now and they have their funding in place.

### **Congressional Update from the Office of US Congressman Don Davis**

Ms. Kimberly Mack, District Director gave a Congressional Update on behalf of Congressman Don Davis. She highlighted the following in her presentation.

### Congressional Casework

- Each Congressional office has a designated casework team that acts as a liaison between the constituents of district and federal agencies to work through whatever issues they are facing. Caseworkers cannot advocate or change a particular outcome or decision. Some wait periods have been as long as 60-90 days. Federal agencies are required to respond to their inquiries.
- Casework out of Halifax County is not very high. They may have 5-7 cases per month. District-wide they have closed about 500 cases. An example of one of the success stories is that today they found out one of their towns received a \$300,000 grant to remodel their police department. They not only work with individual constituents, but cities and towns as well.

### Constituent Outreach

- They are out and about meeting with local governments, non-profits agencies, and educational entities.

### Congressional Educational Opportunities

- Students who live and attend school in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District can participate in a variety of opportunities.
- One is the congressional art competition that usually takes place in the spring of the year. First place winner has their artwork in the Rotunda in Washington, DC. Second place winner has their artwork displayed in the congressional office in Washington, DC and third place winner has their artwork displayed in the district office. She noted they did not have any art from Halifax County and she knows they have artists within these school systems. She asked those who receive this information to share it and encourage the youth here to participate in these opportunities.
- App Challenge for middle and high school students. The deadline is November.
- Service Academy Nominations – closing date has not been finalized. Reach out to her if they know anyone who is interested so they can make sure they follow the necessary steps to be included in a portal.
- Internships (college students) for their district office as well as their office in Washington, DC. Their first intern for the district office was from Edgecombe County.

### Commendations & Greetings

- They do quite a bit of those. They can be for celebrating milestones, letters of condolences, participation in a program for special events. They did 100 last month.

### Flag Requests

#### Federal Grant Assistance

- People ask about funding, how they can obtain funding, letters of support.

### Constituent Representation in Congress

- Congressman Don Davis representing the congressional district.

### Direct Constituent Contact

- Includes: Town Halls, Telephone Town Hall (Had 8,000 people on it), Listening Sessions, Roundtables, Tours, Newsletter, Text & Call, Virtual Seminars, Community Service & Outreach.
- They have been to Roanoke Rapids quite a bit. They recently visited the hospital and last month they visited NC Works, Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District and SuperCuts Barber Shop.

### Legislative Updates

- Congressman Davis is the Vice Ranking Member of the House of Agriculture Committee and Vice Ranking Member on the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness.
- He introduced 8 pieces of legislation (6 of which are bipartisan).
- Cosponsored over 150 pieces of legislation (More than 100 are bipartisan)
- Co-led 21 pieces of legislation.
- One of the most bipartisan Freshman in the House (85% bipartisan record on co-sponsorships).
- Democratic Co-Chair of the bipartisan Agriculture Labor Working Group.
- Member of the House Armed Services Committee's Quality of Life Panel.

### Short-Term Spending Bill

- Congressman Davis voted to continue to fund the government for 45 days and prevent a government shutdown.
- Legislation includes \$16 billion in disaster relief and delivers the resources necessary to keep essential government services running.
- A government shutdown would directly impact 6,700 federal workers, 46,000 veterans, and 174,000 seniors in NC's First Congressional District who rely on lifesaving government services.

Ms. Mack announced there were some happenings on the House floor as she was driving to Roanoke Rapids from Greenville this afternoon. She shared the following statement from Congressman Davis on the motion to vacate the Speaker.

*"Residents of North Carolina's 1st Congressional District elected me to work with Democrats and Republicans to tackle our families' most challenging issues. The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress began with 15 rounds of votes before successfully selecting a Speaker, which was my first exposure to service in Congress. Today's motion to vacate is no surprise – it is simply a continuation of our first few days in office. People are tired of the division and chaos and desire a government that prioritizes them.*

*Because the status quo does not reflect my value of service, I will cast a bipartisan vote to vacate the Speaker. My vote will be in support of a Speaker, regardless of any individual or party, committed to stabilizing the American government by putting people and our Constitutional duties, not politics, front and center. Eastern North Carolinians and the American people deserve nothing less."*

#### Appropriations Update

- The City of Roanoke Rapids was not awarded; however, Halifax County was in his recommendation to move forward with a body scanner. With the current state in Washington, DC it is expected that the only action on the floor for the remainder of this week is to hopefully vote for a new Speaker.

#### Full Circle

- When Congressman Davis and congressional staff are out in the community, they meet remarkable people.
- He will go back and make a congressional speech on the House Floor. Following his speech in the Chamber, it goes live across his social media platforms.
- A Congressional Record is obtained by etching the constituents' names in history and then presented to them in their community.
- If they know of outstanding individuals doing remarkable things, please share that information with them because they would love to honor them in some way.

Ms. Mack shared Congressman Davis's social media platforms and website. She invited City Council and the public to reach out to them for any help and assistance they may need.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the City had a project and the costs of the project, could they reach out to Congressman Davis's office to ask for information on how or where they could seek that funding. Ms. Mack replied yes, they can comb through their congressional research to see what grant opportunities may be available for the project. They can also write letters of support.

#### **Consideration of Revised Mutual Assistance Agreement – Halifax Regional Drug Task Force**

Police Chief Guyant stated on August 15, 2023, City Council voted to allow the mutual aid agreement between the Halifax County Sheriff's Office and Police Department for the formation of the Halifax County Regional Drug Task Force. He and Sheriff Davis had a lot of conversations with some people and they advised that it would be a good idea that they revise the MOU to include some language about gangs. There has been

funding available in the past, (none at the present moment), from state and federal agencies. A lot of these particular grants are tied into criminal activities involving gangs and drugs.

He reported in Halifax County there are about 30 different types of gangs that have been identified. There is 500+/- gang members in the area. Most of the individuals considered gang members are those committing violent crimes such as robberies and homicides.

He presented the agreement again with a couple of additions. He called attention to the sentence on page 1, "...ensuring that gang affiliation is validated to identify if criminal narcotics violations could be considered as enhancements during state and/or federal prosecution." The affiliation of a gang member is not just saying they are in a gang, there is actually a validation process. They may have gang tattoos, gang literature or gang things in their search warrants or on social media. If they validate a person to be a gang member especially in a narcotics trafficking case, then that person could have enhancements attached to their punishment if they go to federal court.

He said they added to the sentence on page 2, "...organized gang and criminal organizations operating within Halifax County, North Carolina." That is again to not just talk about this task force that was specifically targeting narcotics traffickers and dealers, but also their affiliations with gangs. In the criminal world, a lot of times these things go hand and hand. It was important that they include this language as well.

Chief Guyant referred to page 7, Supplemental Funding to Agencies through Grants. It states: Any grants applied for pursuant to any future funding opportunities related to gang and criminal organization will be mutually applied for and be made available exclusively for the Task Force. He and Sheriff Davis had a long conversation about his history of writing grants and how they could combine their efforts, especially using the Task Force as a vehicle to get them there. They can apply for mutual grants for the City and County together to tackle those particular problems. In the past, there have been several grants available to cities and counties fighting the elements of gang affiliation with narcotics trafficking. They are talking about gangs related to Mexican cartels and different types of gangs they were familiar with such as Crips, Bloods, etc. There are so many different types than just those particular gangs. There are different types of organized crime units that are flowing around here. They are seeing remnants of Mexican cartels in the city and county here lately.

He said they wanted to bring this before City Council to review. It has not been taken

before Halifax County Board of Commissioners yet by Sheriff Davis to make the changes. They are trying to propose a Mutual Aid Agreement to foster interagency cooperation in the enforcement of the NC Controlled Substances Act by formulating the guidelines under which the Task Force will operate. They are including the language of gang, gang affiliation and gang validation which will help them out as far as funding down the road. Having that present in the mutual aid agreement when applying for funds can show they are working together to fight this issue. He stated this was a revision to an agreement they had already agreed upon on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Attorney Davis added he reviewed both agreements. When Chief Guyant brought the new information and said he and Sheriff Davis believe they could qualify for more funding if they added this language. The changes are very minor to the original agreement. He did not think it expands the scope of the enforcement by any material degree, but it does make the City potentially eligible for more funding for the grants. He has no legal concerns with those changes.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant, and unanimously carried to approve the changes made to the agreement.

### **Consideration of District 1 City Council Member Appointment**

Mayor Doughtie stated City Council decided in a previous meeting that any individual interested in the District 1 City Council seat vacated by the resignation of former Councilmember Tommy Daughtry would submit an application for consideration. (Applications were enclosed in the agenda packet and are on file in the Clerk's Office). He said each applicant would come forward and have up to five minutes to make their presentation. He said it was also recommended that City Council refrain from getting into conversation and questioning the applicants. After they hear from all the applicants, there will be a vote to make an appointment to City Council.

The following applicants asked City Council for their consideration to be appointed to the District 1 City Council seat.

#### **Sherry Mills**

Ms. Mills stated she resides at 515 Arbutus Drive West. She was a native of Roanoke Rapids and a graduate of Roanoke Rapids High School. She gave an overview of her background, experience, and service on various committees and boards as well as her vision for the City.

#### **Curtis Strickland**

Mr. Strickland of 535 Virginia Street stated he was a lifelong resident of Roanoke Rapids. He described his background, experience and expressed his excitement for

the chance to give back to the community.

Jacob Dean

Mr. Dean said he resides at 1017 Rapids Street. He told City Council of his background and experience in political work and expressed his unique perspective related to his age and how it would be beneficial in serving on City Council.

Tony Brown

Mr. Brown of 1017 Green Street stated he retired with 30 years of experience in local government. He presented his background, experience, and services on various boards and committees. He also expressed his vision for the City.

Mayor Doughtie asked if City Council was to now make nominations for the appointment.

City Attorney replied that City Council could discuss the various nominees. The proper procedure at this point was for a motion and vote.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he was happy City Council did go through this process and the way they went through this process. They have filled vacancies in the past and in many cases some of them did not know the actual candidates. He hopes they will continue this process in how they fill vacancies. This way they get a chance to hear from the candidates and get to know all of them.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee to appoint Tony Brown to the vacant seat, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and Councilwoman Bryant voted in favor; Councilman Stainback and Councilman Smith voted against resulting in a tie. Mayor Doughtie voted against the motion. Motion failed by a 3-2 vote.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Stainback to consider Curtis Strickland to fill the District 1 Council seat. Councilman Smith and Councilman Stainback voted in favor; Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and Councilwoman Bryant voted against resulting in a tie. Mayor Doughtie voted in favor. Motion carried by a 3-2 vote.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he believed they had all good candidates that came before City Council tonight.

Councilwoman Bryant echoed Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee's sentiments as well. She was happy that they have people that are interested in serving. She thinks this process

was definitely worthwhile. It was good to put a name with a face even if you do not know them personally. She agrees that they should probably consider following this process if they have openings in the future. She thanked the candidates for their interest.

### City Manager's Report

City Manager Traynham reported last night she attended the American Legion First Responders Awards and Dinner along with Fire Chief Patrick and Police Chief Guyant. Two City employees were recognized by the Shaw-May Post 38, the local American Legion Chapter. Retired Deputy Fire Chief Wes Hux was honored as Firefighter of the Year and Captain Jeff Baggett was honored as Police Officer of the Year. The members of the local chapter of the American Legion have unanimously agreed move those two to the State level. She stated the City has a lot of great employees who give and it is important that they are recognized. She thanked the American Legion for their efforts in that.

She announced tomorrow was National Coffee with a Cop Day. She encouraged everyone to go tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m. at Hardees on Julian Allsbrook Hwy. and have coffee with local police officers and talk about whatever they wanted to talk about.

She said this Saturday, October 7, 2023, the Police Club will be having their annual cornhole tournament at TJ Davis Recreation Center. It is one of their big fundraisers for Christmas for Kids. They have lots of great door prizes. For more information, contact the Police Department.

City Manager Traynham stated the month of October is Fire Prevention Month. The Fire Department is busy with presentations for local community schools and other organizations to share the importance of fire prevention.

She announced on Monday, October 9, 2023, City offices will be closed in observance of Columbus Day. On Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Doughtie has a birthday. On Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. at City Hall in the Human Resources Office, there will be a Flu Shot Clinic. Also, on October 12<sup>th</sup>, the Roanoke Valley Senior Expo will be held at Kirkwood Adams Community Center from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated it was good to see so many people come out to the meeting and have interest in the City. He thanked everyone for coming out.

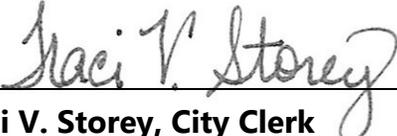
Councilman Smith asked Mayor Doughtie if Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce

President Ginny Lewis could tell City Council what she told him earlier.

Ms. Lewis reported they were asked if they would support the resolution regarding the casino in the Entertainment District. She presented it before the board and they will be submitting a letter of support for that resolution. She hopes to have it to the City by the first of next week.

<b>Adjournment</b>
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There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant, and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

  
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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: October 17, 2023**