



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

**Present:** Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor  
Wayne Smith, Mayor Pro Tem

W. Keith Bell)  
Sandra W. Bryant)  
Rex Stainback)  
Curtis Strickland)

## **Council Members**

Kelly Traynham, City Manager  
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney  
Traci Storey, City Clerk  
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director  
Shane Guyant, Police Chief  
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director  
Kristyn Anderson, Interim Planning Director  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief

**Absent:** Tony Hall, Main Street Development Director  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. 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 Councilman Bell, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Smith, and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda as presented.

**Public Comment (Scheduled)**

**Joey Bright (Taylor Insurance)**

Mr. Bright stated his purpose tonight was not to sell a thing. They have had many people come to them with a situation that has popped up. He was talking about critical illness of the employees, whether it be fire, rescue, city council or other members that work for the City of Roanoke Rapids. He referred to the information given to City Council in their agenda packets (on file in Clerk's Office). The information included approximately 125 departments and municipalities who have made the purchase of this insurance. Critical illness is something that is left on the backburner. Critical illness is defined as heart attack, stroke, end-stage renal kidney failure, major organ failure, cancer, coronary artery bypass and skin cancer. He called their attention to the annual premiums per employee. Most charge on a monthly basis. Many have something in their homes whether it be cancer, stroke or heart attack and it is paid monthly. He stated why would the City of Roanoke Rapids need this. Simply because they all know someone that has come down with some of these diseases. He gave an example if he was diagnosed with cancer while in the hospital. Two of the seven diseases, the policy pays face amount on both. Say he had \$10,000 policy; he would get a check for \$20,000. When something like this happens, it is a hardship on all of them. They have all experienced it or know someone who has. Rent and bills continue. There are co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance, health insurance and Medicare. The ages are up to age 75 before the term reduces, but they would still be covered. He was proposing to look at what they have and let it be an option for the employees and City Council. Lives are put in particular situations daily. This allows them to maintain the same lifestyle they had prior to receiving notice of one of those diseases. He asked them to take a look at this for the citizens that work for the City. They could have it as an employee deduction or the City could pay for it; something to discuss. They have had the opportunity for it on a monthly basis, but not a yearly basis. He said he previously met with City Manager Traynham, Police Department Administrative Assistant Tina May, and Fire Chief Patrick about this for about an hour. He asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Doughtie thanked Mr. Bright for coming and stated the City Council would look into it.

**Public Comment (Unscheduled)**

**Jan Morgan**

Ms. Morgan said she hoped the citizens and taxpayers pay attention and if they have a question or if something feels a little off, they research and follow up. Her concern tonight was they had the conversation about picking up trash. She thought that was

great. Then she was thinking that the City picked up trash and Boy Scout Troop picked up 26 or so bags of trash, but she did not think the City owned that property and questioned who owns the property. She found that J. Rives Manning owns the property and five properties in his name et al in the area and one of them is Burger King. When she tore down her shed and put the trash at the road, she called the City and asked how much did it cost and she paid them. She was not a millionaire or a multimillionaire, but she pays what she owes to the City because it's not fair to other citizens to pay for these people's bills. It is just like the building and the other building destroyed by fire. These people with plenty of resources are perfectly happy to let the taxpayers absorb it because it doesn't hit their bottom line. Her reference on the sign-up sheet was Animal Farm. If anyone was familiar with the George Orwell book about Animal Farm, the reason she said that was because one statement in the book stuck with her. The leader says all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others. She pays taxes just like they do, and she hopes they do, and she doesn't know why this person wasn't billed or something. Cutos to the Boy Scouts but why don't they help clean up City parks or something that would help their tax. If they were going to do it, do it with something that will reduce the City's expenses, not something to benefit their wealthy citizens who don't want to pay for their own bills.

### **Approval of City Council Minutes**

Motion was made by Councilman Bell, seconded by Councilman Stainback, and unanimously carried to approve the March 6, 2024 Regular City Council Meeting minutes as drafted.

### **New Business**

#### **Voting Delegate for NCLM 2024-2025 Board of Directors Election**

City Manager Traynham stated the NC League of Municipalities offers annual elections of various capacities within the organization. A voting delegate is necessary to be appointed to participate in the electronic voting process. Voting used to occur at the CityVision Conference. The CityVision Conference is scheduled for April 23-25, 2024 in Winston-Salem. She and Councilman Bell are planning to attend where the results from the election will be announced. She asked City Council to designate Councilman Bell as the voting delegate.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Smith, and unanimously carried to designate Councilman Bell as the City's voting delegate for the 2024-2025 NC League of Municipalities Board of Directors electronic election.

**Audit Contract for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2024**

Finance Director Johnson asked City Council to consider approving the Letter of Engagement and Audit Contract with Gregory T. Redman, CPA to conduct the audit of the City's financial statements year ending June 30, 2024.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith asked how much the audit contract was for last year. Finance Director Johnson replied \$24,000. Mayor Pro Tem Smith confirmed that it has increased \$3,500 from last year. She said that was correct and it had increased because of GASB standards, the new Local Government Commission (LGC) requirements, and the single audit requirements for the federal grants the City receives.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Smith, seconded by Councilman Stainback and unanimously carried to approve the Letter of Engagement and Contract with Gregory T. Redman, CPA to conduct the audit of the City's financial statements for year ending June 30, 2024, and to authorize the Mayor to execute the Engagement Letter and Contract.

**Traffic Code Amendment (Four-way Stop Sign – 13<sup>th</sup> & Virginia Avenue)**

Police Chief Guyant requested City Council consider placing a four-way stop on Virginia Avenue between Julian Allsbrook Hwy. and East 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The Police Department has received a numerous amount of complaints from citizens about this particular street being a thoroughfare and drag-strip. In their first community engagement survey, it is mentioned four times. They conducted traffic enforcement between November 1, 2023 and February 1, 2024. During this three-month period, officers wrote 19 citations for speed and other motor vehicles violations on that particular street. He understands before he came onboard, the department put a four-way stop on Marshall Street because of similar issues. He reached out to Public Works Director Chalker to discuss the history behind that and what would be required to do this on Virginia Avenue. He believes they came up with a location for the four-way stop that would quit this behavior on that street. There are eight different entrance and exit points on Virginia from Julian Allsbrook to E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Six are T-intersections on Virginia Avenue: 15<sup>th</sup>, Pine, Raleigh, 12<sup>th</sup>, Carolina Street, 11<sup>th</sup>. Only two are crossroads: 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. He said 14<sup>th</sup> Street is so close to Julian Allsbrook it would not behoof stopping the behavior because it would still leave a long stretch of road before reaching 10<sup>th</sup> Street. 13<sup>th</sup> and Virginia Avenue was almost halfway and a good spot to put the stop sign. Having a four-way stop sign at that intersection would curb the speeding behavior. They would like to do what they did on Marshall Street with the flashing sign. Since the one on Marshall Street has been there for so long and if City Council approves, they can move the flashing stop sign to 13<sup>th</sup> and Virginia to get people's attention since it would be new. Public Works Director Chalker

told him it would not be a problem moving the stop sign to that location.

**TRAFFIC CODE AMENDMENT**  
**Ordinance No. 2024.07**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE TRAFFIC CODE OF THE CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS, NORTH CAROLINA.**

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS, NORTH CAROLINA that:**

**SECTION 1.** The Roanoke Rapids Traffic Code is amended to install “stop” signs at the intersection of 13<sup>th</sup> Street and Virginia Avenue, making this intersection a four-way stop.

**SECTION 2.** This ordinance shall become effective upon the installation of the appropriate signage.

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Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried to adopt the Traffic Code Amendment, Ordinance No. 2024.07.

**Budget Amendment (FY 2022-23 Workers’ Compensation Audit)**

Finance Director Johnson stated they had the City’s Workers’ Comp audit for fiscal year 2022-2023. She informed City Council that Travelers was six months behind and the City should have received it back in September. Normally, if she had received it in September, she would be able to book an accrual to encumber those funds. The City just received it and it was an additional \$64,340. That is based on the workers’ comp claims, costs of the claims and based on the City’s exposure such as subcontractors. She added that she hopes they do not have this issue again and the City was no longer using Travelers, they are using the NC League of Municipalities.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if this money would have to come out of the fund balance. Finance Director Johnson replied yes.

Mayor Doughtie stated he did not believe they had a choice because they had to pay it.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if it was based on an additional six months. Finance Director Johnson said no, it was based on FY 2022-23 workers' comp claims and Travelers was six months late giving it to the City; they even had to inquire about getting it. Councilwoman Bryant asked how much it was prior to \$64,340. Finance Director Johnson replied it was \$199,686 so with the additional \$64,340, it totals \$264,026.

Mayor Doughtie confirmed that it was based on the prior year claims. Finance Director Johnson replied that was correct.

**Ordinance No. 2024.08  
CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS  
BUDGET AMENDMENT**

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

**SECTION 1.** The following additional amounts are hereby appropriated for the operation of City Government and its activities for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, according to the following schedule:

**SCHEDULE A – PROJECT FUND REVENUES**

Fund Balance – FY 22-23 Workers' Compensation Audit

<b>Project Revenues – To Increase the Workers' Compensation Budget</b>	<b>\$64,340.00</b>
<b>FUND PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,340.00</b>

**SECTION 2.** The following additional revenues and reductions in appropriations are available for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, in order to meet the foregoing appropriations, according to the following schedule:

**SCHEDULE B – PROJECT FUND EXPENDITURES**

Funding to General Fund – FY 22-23 Workers' Compensation Audit

<b>Project Expenditures – To Increase the Workers' Compensation Budget</b>	<b>\$64,340.00</b>
<b>FUND PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,340.00</b>

**SECTION 3.** This ordinance shall become effective upon adoption.

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Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Councilman Strickland and unanimously carried to adopt the Budget Amendment, Ordinance No. 2024.08 in the amount of \$64,340.

## City Manager's Report

City Manager Traynham announced on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Parks & Recreation Department will host two Easter Egg Hunts. One at Chaloner Recreation and one at TJ Davis Recreation. Ages 12 years and under may participate.

She stated they were in their budgeting season for the next fiscal year. The budget process and ordinance are one of the most important things the City Council approves every year. Staff are working to collect their numbers to submit to her by the end of the month. She anticipates in late April that City Council will have some specific meetings with the departments. During the first meeting in May, she plans to provide the budget message. They are still awaiting the revenue estimates from the State. From some of the meetings and trainings she and staff have attended recently, she feels confident in this current fiscal year that they have conservatively estimated their expenses and revenues. The City should break even this year.

She announced on Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, City offices will be closed in observance of Good Friday.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith asked with the new tax valuations from Halifax County, did she think City Council could work the budget out where they could give maybe a 2-cent tax reduction on the citizens in Roanoke Rapids. City Manager Traynham said they just received the preliminary numbers, and they would look at the revenue-neutral rate and what that would realize. Ultimately, the City Council has to approve a new tax rate in the development of a budget. Mayor Pro Tem Smith said while they were working on the budget, if they could think about reducing the rate by at least 2-cents. That would really help the people in Roanoke Rapids; a lot of people are on social security.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith has some questions about the political and other signs that are on the streets. The Primary election was March 5<sup>th</sup> and there are still political signs out there. There are also signs about buying houses on the streets too. He knows it interferes with Public Works when they have to cut grass and different things like that. He asked if they were making any effort to get them cleaned up or is there anything they can do. He recalled one of the City's ordinances says they have to get permission to put the signs out there. He knows they can't put the signs on telephone and light poles without permission.

City Manager Traynham said signage in the right-of-way can be removed. There is not a right to place signs in the right-of-way because of traffic regulatory devices and so forth. The City does have ordinances about it. There has been legislation from the

Supreme Court level over the last several years in various interpretations stating that they can enforce the location of a sign but cannot enforce the content. She questioned how they were supposed to look at a sign and say it was a political sign if you cannot regulate the content. In the past, the City has gotten in situations to pick up certain signs, but not those signs. Staff do not touch any political signs at all. It is the responsibility of the candidates to collect their signs. Any other signage, the City has the ability to remove them from the right-of-way.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith asked if they could contact the political people and ask if they could remove the signs; the election is over.

Attorney Davis said there was a state statute on when individuals can put up the political signs and when they should take them down. In the local area, it appears it is not followed as best as it could be. The heart of the issue as far as having a City program to go around to collect them all, they want to avoid a situation where a candidate says they were picking on them. That is a little different when the election is over. He would suggest there be an attempt to reach out to those candidates with signs still up to remove them.

City Manager Traynham said as far as the other signs, staff can work within confines of interpretation under the First Amendment free speech rights. In general, if it is on private property, permission should be secured prior to someone placing the sign.

Attorney Davis stated if it is on private property, that is the private landowner's job to do. The City does have sign ordinances that regulate large signs through zoning, but they were talking about the small yard signs that stick out of the ground.

City Manager Traynham reported in the past that they have made a statement to all the businesses that the City has collected the signs and put them in a specific location so they can pick them up. They know these signs come at a cost. The City does not trash them when they pick them up.

Mayor Doughtie said they were not talking about removing signs before an election. The election has been over two weeks. He thought they could notify people to let them know they have two weeks after the election to collect their signs from the right-of-way.

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

Finance Director Johnson reported for the period ending February 29, 2024, general fund year-to-date receipts totaled \$13,990,240.14. Year-to-date expenditures totaled

\$11,770,167.91. As a result, general fund year-to-date revenues exceeded expenditures by \$2,220,072.23. After the month of February, 60.9% of the budget year has been completed.

She reported the following revenues were collected during the month of February:

- Current and Prior Year Ad Valorem Tax
- Motor Vehicle Tax
- Sale of Surplus Property
- Sales Tax
- Hold Harmless Revenue
- Residential Solid Waste Fees
- Commercial Solid Waste Fees
- Interest Revenue
- Grants & Donation Funds

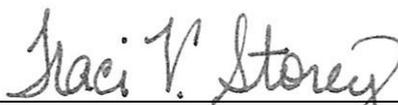
Finance Director Johnson stated as of February the City is in good standing as far as the revenue exceeding expenditures, but they need to hold tight until the end of the fiscal year. She feels very comfortable they will meet all their budget projections.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith thanked the Finance Department for the way they have invested the money they do have. They have about doubled the interest they anticipated getting.

Finance Director Johnson stated she did not anticipate the second quarter to be as good as it was because she was told it would end on the first quarter. It extended into the second quarter and added they may need to look at something after the second quarter.

## Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Bell, seconded by Councilman Stainback and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

  
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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: April 2, 2024