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**Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council**

A special meeting (Budget Prioritization Discussions) of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on Tuesday, April 5, 2016 at 3:00 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)

**Council Members**

Suetta S. Scarbrough)

Carol H. Cowen)

Wayne Smith)

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, NCCMC, City Clerk

Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director

Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director

Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

City Manager Scherer stated two Department Heads are here to give initial briefings on their departmental budgets.

**Planning & Development Department**

Planning & Development Director Lasky reviewed the following memorandum outlining the department’s budget priorities for FY 2016 – 2017:

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Joseph Scherer, City Manager

FROM: Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director/s/

**RE: Budget Priorities for FY 2016 – 2017**

DATE: March 27, 2016

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**Additional Funding Expenditure Listed by Priority**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority** | **Description** | **Funds Requested** | **Type of Fund** |
| 1 | Planner, *reinstate full-time position*  *(unfunded since March 2009 due to lay-off)* | $ 54,088.52 | Operational - ongoing |
| 2 | Staff Vehicle 2 *4WD SUV* | $ 27,000.00 | Capital, one-time |
| 3 | Staff Vehicle 3 *Ford F150 4x4* | $ 30,000.00 | Capital, one-time |
| 4 | Staff Vehicle 4 *4WD SUV* | $ 27,000.00 | Capital, one-time |
| 5 | Demolition of Non-Residential Buildings | $120,000.00 | Operational - ongoing |
| 6 | Unified Development Ordinance  *include graphics, user-friendly explanations* | $ 29,000.00 | Capital, one-time |

**Department Staff**

The activities of the Planning & Development Department fall under three categories:

* 1. **City Land Use Ordinance Administration & Enforcement –** *Director, Planner (vacant)*
  2. **NC Building Code Administration** – *Code Enforcement Supervisor, Code Enforcement Officer*
  3. **Minimum Housing & Junk Vehicle** – *Minimum Housing Officer (1)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Employee Name** | **Position Title** |
| Kelly T. Lasky | Planning & Development Director |
| Brian Duhadaway | Code Enforcement Supervisor |
| *(vacant, unfunded)* | Planner |
| Kristopher Jordan | Code Enforcement Officer |
| Donald Tart | Minimum Housing Code Enforcement Officer |
| *(vacant, unfunded)* | Minimum Housing Code Enforcement Officer |
| Kristyn K. Anderson | Administrative Support Assistant II |

**Anticipated Accomplishments as a Result of Requested Funds and Capital Items**

**Goal: Pro-Active Code Enforcement & Compliance *(Zoning, Minimum Housing, NC Building Codes)***

The Department has been limited in active code enforcement efforts due to limited staffing, especially in the activities of Zoning and Minimum Housing. Our ability to perform inspections has been reduced due to the workload caused by processing individual applications/requests/complaints. The economic recovery over the last few years has stabilized the workload of staff to levels consistent with the 1990s and early 2000s. It must be remembered that a significant amount of time is required to process applications/inquiries/complaints and follow the legal steps to pursue compliance.

*Objectives to Achieve Goal:*

* ***Increase Staffing.*** The Department requests that the City Council reinstate funding for the position of “**Planner**” to assist the Director in Ordinance administration, enforcement and inspections. Current levels of service are low due to one person (Director) being responsible for handling all land-use requests. Operation on a complaint-basis creates the perception that staff does not treat everyone the same (*if my neighbor can do it, why can’t I?).*  The department relies on existing contractor/developer/owner prior knowledge to obtain Zoning Permits. Existing staff members have made every effort to respond to complaints; however, as a result they are pulled away from their

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assigned job duties.A staff Planner will improve the overall efforts to achieve code compliance through active inspections to improve the community appearance and preserve property values.

* Funding of this position will allow the Director the time needed for long-range planning efforts and department management.
* ***New Unified Development Ordinance*** to graphically represent the requirements for development standards and provide a user-friendly document that can be understood more easily by residents.
* ***Professional Development/Staff Training.*** Department staff are required to have considerable knowledge of governmental laws, programs, and processes. Annual education-training and certification maintenance is a requirement for the City to provide inspection and plan review services. The Department currently participates in the minimum level of required training to maintain services.
* ***Customer Service and Satisfaction.***The Department continues to provide customer-oriented service to assist residents and business owners in achieving code compliance. Planning and Code Enforcement staff members continue to maintain flexibility in their schedules to meet the accessibility needs of our customers. The entire staff continues to place strong emphasis on customer service.

Planning & Development Director Lasky pointed out that her number one priority is staffing. She stated having a Planner would enable her to focus on long-range planning and the larger, more critical issues.

Councilman Bobbitt asked the cost to fund the Planner position.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated $54,000.00 which includes benefits. She pointed out that the Planner could also assist with minimum housing code enforcement.

Mayor Doughtie asked if we have an updated job description for a Planner.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated the following is included in the packet of information:

**PLANNER**

General Statement of Duties

Performs professional technical planning work for the City.

Distinguishing Features of the Class

An employee in this class performs research and background work for the facilitation of land use permit applications, provides demographic and socio-economic data to the public, and assists the Planning Director in

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the long range planning duties for the City. Works includes public contract functions with contractors, engineers, developers, and the general public and involves giving information, answering inquiries and carrying out the City ordinances in the areas of zoning, planning, and other land use policies. Works requires the performance of technical support duties such as inspections and doing research work for any planning project for the City. Work also includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to

matters of significance. Work is supervised by the Planning Director and is evaluated through conferences, review of assigned projects, and overall completion of assigned tasks.

Duties and Responsibilities

Essential Duties and Tasks

* Prepares preliminary impact statement for land use applications and researches for the Planning Director any aspect of the land use ordinance; serves as City’s zoning administrator.
* Does research of data and statistics for reports for the department.
* Enforces sign ordinance for the City.
* Works to assure proper notification steps are taken in rezoning cases.
* Assists with daily inquiries from the contractors, engineers, developers, property owners, and the general public on interpretation of land use questions; refers precedent setting questions to Planning Director.
* Prepares planning data; interprets maps and data; prepares special growth projections; works with committees on planning issues; makes presentations as necessary to the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment; assists Department Head in working with these committees and preparation of a variety of planning issues.
* Assists Department Head with data for long range efforts and provides population and socio-economic interpretation of census, land use, and other data on which this plan is based.
* Assists Director with annexation studies and processes voluntary annexation requests.

Additional Job Duties

* Performs special projects for planning function.
* Comply with Personal Protection Equipment Guidelines, and MSDS Guidelines.
* Performs related duties as required.

Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

## Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

* Considerable knowledge of principles and practices of municipal planning.
* Considerable knowledge of the environmental and socio-economic implications of the planning procedures and processes.
* Considerable knowledge of governmental laws, programs, and services pertinent to the planning process.
* Considerable knowledge of planning data and ability to perform research functions and draft reports and position papers for higher level review and actions.
* Working knowledge of computer applications and familiarity with kind and types of computer programs used in the department.
* Skill in the collection, analysis, and compilation of technical data from maps, charts, and other

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sources.

* Ability to collect and organize data and perform preliminary analysis techniques in regard to land use surveys, population projection, and environmental information.
* Ability to work effectively with employees and the general public and answer basic land use questions for the City.
* Ability to communicate effectively in oral and written forms.
* Ability to coordinate special work efforts and projects for the Planning Director.

## Physical Requirements

* Must be able to physically perform the basic life operational functions of climbing, stooping, kneeling, reaching, standing, walking, pushing, pulling, lifting, fingering, talking, grasping, feeling, hearing, and repetitive motions.
* Must be able to perform sedentary work exerting up to 10 pounds of force occasionally and/or a negligible mount of force frequently and constantly to move objects.
* Must possess the visual acuity to prepare and analyze data and figures, operate a computer terminal, do extensive reading, use measurement devices, and do visual inspection of land areas for purposes.

## Desirable Education and Experience

* Graduation from a four year college or university with a major in planning, public administration, geography, or related field and some experience in planning or related occupation; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

## Special Requirement

* Possession of a valid North Carolina driver’s licenses.
* Prefer certification from American Institute of Certified.

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Planning & Development Director Lasky stated Priorities 2, 3 and 4 are vehicle needs. She stated the vehicles in her department are over 14 to 15 years old. She stated they need reliable vehicles to meet individuals on sites (contractors, developers, engineers, etc.) and to also travel out of town for required training to maintain certifications. She stated there have been many times when the vehicles would not start or break down while they are out on the road.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated for staff safety, she is requesting two small SUV type vehicles and another pickup truck similar to the one funded last year. She stated our vehicles are used for zoning inspections on a daily basis. She stated the old Chevrolet Malibu vehicles are not ideal when they have to go out in the field or during disaster recovery because they are so low to the ground. She stated the Chevrolet Malibu vehicles were program cars and the other vehicles in the department were hand-me-downs from other departments. She also pointed out that the department has exceeded its maintenance budget due to the repair needs of these older vehicles. Planning & Development Director Lasky pointed out that the prices shown on the request are the State contract prices.

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Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the Council could be provided with a list of all of the department’s vehicles including the mileage.

Councilman Smith asked which would be more beneficial to the department—truck or SUV.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated the SUV would be more beneficial for carrying large plans and posters to meetings and an SUV would also have 4-wheel drive and the elevation needed to go out in the field.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if all of the old vehicles have over 100,000 miles.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated the two Malibu vehicles do not have over 100,000 miles but the transmission and almost everything else in them has had to be replaced.

Councilwoman Cowen stated it is not so much the number of miles but the age of the vehicles that concerns her.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated for most of the department’s work, they operate on an appointment basis and when you have a vehicle that will not start and you are unable to make an appointment, it not only affects the person you were to meet but it affects the progression of staff’s day.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the City is required to pay property taxes on vehicles.

City Manager Scherer stated no.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the increase in vehicle insurance.

City Manager Scherer stated we pay a set amount no matter the age or number of vehicles we have.

Mayor Doughtie asked if it would be legal to approach a dealer and see if they could match the State contract price.

City Manager Scherer stated it would be easier to buy through State contract and avoid choosing one dealer over another.

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Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that the State contract prices are public on the State’s website and some dealers have been amazed at the discounted price of the vehicles.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated she realizes that the $120,000.00 requested

for demolition for non-residential buildings is a lot of money but we have a number of court orders for commercial buildings that are unsafe (i.e. David King’s Building B on Jackson Street, People’s Theater; outbuilding at 222 Hamilton Street). She stated our Code Enforcement Officers work diligently on these matters. She stated the cost for residential demolitions run between $7,000.00 and $9,000.00.

Councilman Bobbitt suggested we may get a better deal by doing more than one.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated although we have a number of orders already approved, we do not have the funds. She stated for the commercial buildings, we may not be able to do one building with $120,000.00. She suggested that we set up a fund to continually put funds in to do these demolitions.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the Fire Department could burn them down once they are hazard free.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated that is one option but if we request grant funding that comes through the Federal Government, we have to deal with the State Preservation Office because we have one of the largest historical districts in the State.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if we could use some of the funds to hire an attorney to get the property owners to demolish the property.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated we already had orders for these properties and the courts have ruled that the property owner must demolish the properties. She stated unfortunately we have cases where the property owners do not respond.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he was referring to going after the property owner’s other assets.

City Manager Scherer stated we can place a lien on the property and any other properties they own but we cannot do this until the property is demolished.

Councilwoman Cowen asked if the lawyer could send a letter to the property owners.

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Planning & Development Director Lasky stated with our process, that is what is done. She pointed out that from start to finish, we stay in touch with the property owners and we give them as much opportunity as possible to either bring their property up to code or to have the property demolished.

Councilwoman Cowen stated she has a lot of concerns about these properties. She stated she does not feel the City should be responsible for paying to have the properties demolished.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated this is very common in cities with older downtown areas. She stated the bank will not loan money to demolish a building.

Councilman Smith stated 1026 Roanoke Avenue looks as bad as it did before it was demolished. He stated Main Street has done nothing with the property.

City Manager Scherer stated we have been unable to acquire the building. He stated we have filed to go through the court process.

Councilman Smith stated he thought this had already been done.

Planning & Development Director Lasky pointed out that the process takes a very long time. She stated we do realize that City Council gets a lot of complaints about certain buildings. She stated in some cases, if the building is secure and not a threat to life and safety, nothing is done. She stated 1026 Roanoke Avenue looked like it was going to spill out onto Roanoke Avenue.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about grant funding for demolitions in the historical district.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated most of those grant funds require a re-investment of the property after demolition. She stated because we have one of the largest historical districts in the State, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is involved.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how strict the agency is about guidelines within the historical district.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated it depends on the funding. She reminded Council of what we had to go through with SHPO to revitalize a portion of the historic mill

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village through the CDBG Program.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the line item 10-4900-7401 in the amount of $9,000.00 for equipment.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated that amount is to replace computers. She stated five out of the six computers in the department are over six years old and are low on memory.

Planning & Development Director Lasky pointed out that the number 6 priority is the development of a Unified Development Ordinance which is essentially the Land Use Ordinance. She stated other municipalities are now using this terminology. She stated our current Land Use Ordinance is almost 20 years and it is not user-friendly. She stated we would like to develop the ordinance using graphics and figures that are easier to understand. She referred to a sample included in the packet showing graphics.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated they are also looking at adjusting the department’s fees included in the City’s Fee Schedule for different permits. She stated she is also submitting a grant application for $27,500.00 to help offset some of the department’s costs.

Mayor Doughtie stated the department’s budget last year was $454,280.21 and the requested amount for this year is $692,614.00.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated that is correct.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if they plan to use the entire amount budgeted this year for residential demolition.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated yes. She stated our primary goal is to maintain compliance and clean up the City.

**Public Works Department**

Public Works Director Chalker stated his department’s budget is the largest in the City.

He reviewed the following priorities with Council:

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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority** | **Account** | **Item** | **Budget Request** |
| 1 | 12.5810 | Rear Loader Trash Truck | $190,000.00 |
| 1 | 12.5600 | Rubber Tire Loader (Used) | $ 70,000.00 |
| 1 | 12.5450 | Cemetery and Fleet Maintenance Software | $ 60,000.00 |
| 2 | 12.5600 | Asphalt Recycle Trailer | $ 33,000.00 |
| 2 | 12.5600 | Traffic Signal – Park & 7th | $ 42,000.00 |
| 2 | 12.5000 | City Hall Roof | $ 90,000.00 |
| 2 | 12.5600 | Vacuum Trailer | $ 50,000.00 |
| 2 | 12.5820 | Knuckleboom | $160,000.00 |
| 3 | 12.4000 | Theater Roof(s) | $ 60,000.00 |
| 3 | 12.5600 | Backhoe with Attachments (Used) | $ 90,000.00 |
| 3 | 12.5600 | Track Loader (Used) | $ 60,000.00 |
| **Total – Public Works Department** | | | **$905,000.00** |

Public Works Director Chalker stated he tries his best to keep the trash truck on a replacement schedule. He stated they run the trash trucks every day and our number one mission is to get solid waste collected. He stated they are happy to support other departments but collecting solid waste is our first priority. He pointed out that he anticipates not having to spend the entire $190,000.00.

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that they are requesting several “used” items. He stated they do not mind purchasing used equipment. He stated they look at functionality. He pointed out that both of our rubber tire loaders have a lot of hours on them.

Public Works Director Chalker stated software for the cemetery and fleet maintenance is another number one priority. He stated they were told four years ago when Finance was upgraded from FLH to SmartFusion that we would be switched but they could never get it to work for them. He stated the folks at SmartFusion said they deal mostly with accounting software. He stated they are still using the old FLH software and there is a danger of losing our cemetery records. He stated these records as well as the fleet maintenance records are very important. He stated with this software, we know everything that has ever been done to a City vehicle.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the asphalt recycle trailer is listed as a number 2 priority but was almost a number 1. He stated we currently pay a vendor to do pothole repairs. He stated we would like to be able to do this ourselves.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how much we pay the outside vendor to repair the potholes.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he does not have a figure but it is about four times as much as what it would cost us to do it. He stated it would be nice to have an asphalt truck but they are very expensive. He stated we had one years ago.

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Councilman Bobbitt stated we used to have our own asphalt plant.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he does not know why the City got rid of the asphalt plant and truck but that was before his time.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was any way to recoup the cost of patching the Sanitary District’s cuts.

Public Works Director Chalker indicated that they do patch the holes but they do not do it immediately, and then they are not responsible for repairs after one year.

Councilwoman Cowen stated she hears complaints about streets every day.

Following further discussion about the street cuts and the incorrect way they are patched—and the fact that our agreement with the Sanitary District only provides for them to be responsible for one year after repair, Mayor Doughtie suggested we take a look at our agreement with the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District.

Mayor Doughtie stated a lot of people do not realize that it is the Sanitary District making the street cuts and that we do not provide water and sewer services as most municipalities do. He stated maybe the media can help educate the public about this.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the traffic signal at Park and 7th is the last signal we own that needs to be upgraded. He stated it is not in compliance with today’s standards.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the City Hall roof needs to be replaced. He stated the current roof is a rubber membrane roof which is at least 10 years old or even 20 years old. He stated they are in “patch mode” right now on this roof.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the vacuum trailer is needed to suck out the mud, water and leaves from the catch basins. He stated they wanted to ask for the truck but the cost was $300,000.00. He stated the Sanitary District does have one.

Public Works Director Chalker stated a knuckleboom is another priority.

Public Works Director stated the roof over the stage and over the cupula area at the Theatre is now 10 years old and both are starting to leak. He stated the Theatre sees a tremendous amount of wind because there are no other buildings out there to help block the

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wind. He stated the strong winds can move the roof.

Councilman Bobbitt stated he thought the roof over the cupula was replaced when we took the Theatre back over.

Public Works Director Chalker stated it was only patched.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the department also needs a backhoe with attachments. He stated we are requesting a used one as the last three we purchased were all used.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how long they last.

Public Works Director Chalker stated about five or six years. He stated we use the backhoe every single day.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how the price would compare to leasing one.

Public Works Director Chalker stated that is something they could check on.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he is also requesting a used track loader.

Public Works Director Chalker also highlighted the following operating budget requests from various divisions in his department:

***Government Buildings:***

* Replace flooring at City Hall: $12,000.00
* Paint exterior of City Hall: $15,000.00

***Public Works:***

* Increase Telephones & Postage by $6,000.00 *(due to increase in notifying homeowners of violations and the associated certified mailing costs—and also the cost of cell phones now coming out of individual budgets instead of one administrative budget)*
* Replace desktop computers: $12,000.00 *(computers are getting some age on them)*

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the City has looked at buying computers in bulk rather than buying by departments to get a better deal.

Public Works Director Chalker stated we did this with our copy machines.

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City Manager Scherer stated we could look at that.

Finance Director Etheridge pointed out that Bob Agoglia, our IT consultant, knows our inventory and which ones are antiquated.

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that Public Works has its own server and in the next fiscal year, we will need to replace it.

* Paint Public Works Building: $5,000.00
* Replace Fence at Public Works: $9,000.00

Public Works Director Chalker stated it is hard to enforce our ordinances on appearance when our building and fencing looks so bad.

Councilman Bobbitt stated those fences have been there a long time and there are others in town that look bad.

***Central Garage:***

* Shop Tools/Equipment: $5,000.00
* Storage Containers (2): $4,900.00 *(garage is running out of room for storage)*

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the contract agreement line item for $5,000.00.

Public Works Director Chalker explained that is for work on our fleet that may be too large for us to do in our shop. He stated you will notice that they have not spent a dime of that money this year.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he also anticipates an increase in power bills and fuel costs, and has increased those lines items in all divisions of Public Works.

***Street:***

* Increase Storm Drainage from $24,000.00 to $26,000.00 *(for run-of-the-mill storm drainage, City spends between $7,000.00 and $10,000.00 each year on the drainage ditch at Lion’s Watch which carries all of the water from the Becker Village area)*
* Alley Improvements – Rocks: $10,000.00
* Alley Improvements – Apron: $30,000.00
* Annual Crack Pouring Program: $28,000.00 *(not been done since Public Works Director Chalker has been with the City)*
* Right-of-Way Maintenance: $35,000.00
* Oil Dry: $4,000.00 *(for traffic accidents, spills)*

***Sanitation:***

* Roll Out Trash Carts: $32,000.00 *(only two carts are left in our inventory)*

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* Rear Dumpers/Trash Truck: $7,500.00 *(dumpers on back of truck)*

***Refuse:***

* Trailer for Knuckleboom Truck: $28,000.00 *(staff runs the wheels off this vehicle)*
* New Leaf Machine: $29,000.00 *(this is really needed)*

***Cemetery:***

* Commercial Lawn Mower: $9,500.00 *(last one purchased three years ago)*

***Property Maintenance:***

* Commercial Mowers (2): $18,000.00

Public Works Director Chalker stated he would like to request three entry level positions. He stated some have some that the Public Works Department is short 9 people. He stated that he contends that we are short 15 people. He stated the cost for all three positions with fringe benefits is $98,664.00.He t

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned.



**Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, NCCMC City Clerk**

5/3/2016

**Approved by Council Action on:**