



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, August 6, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Sandra W. Bryant, Mayor Pro Tem

W. Keith Bell)
Rex Stainback)
Curtis Strickland)

Council Members

Kelly Traynham, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director
Jeff Baggett, Police Captain
Kristyn Anderson, Planning & Development Director
Kelly Daughtry, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief

Absent: Shane Guyant, Police Chief

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 4:00 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.

Councilman Stainback asked to be recused from Item 6 a) due to a conflict.

Motion was made Councilman Bell, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda as presented with the recusal of Councilman Stainback from Item 6 a).

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Jerry McDaniel

Mr. McDaniel asked Mayor Doughtie a question because he confused him. When he told him he had dumped enough coal ash in the Roanoke River to move the city limits over into Northampton County and the papermill property line over and county line over. He was coming in the foyer one night and the Mayor said to him that there was nothing the City Council; they don't care anything about coal ash in the river, they don't know anything about coal ash in the river and they don't care to know anything about coal ash in the river. He said he thought he was lying. If he will tell him anywhere on the line, the past Council because he was not by himself up there. Anywhere along the line that they all agreed they did not want to hear anything about the coal ash in the river, that is an environmental anomaly that needs to be addressed. Some people won't even tell their neighbors there is coal ash in the river. The farce of a distillery. Who would buy a run-down sewing factory and try to open a distillery just downstream from a papermill. That's a shame and a lot of people are in on it, the usual suspects. They would not be hearing anything from him about coal ash.

Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant, seconded by Councilman Bell, and unanimously carried to approve the July 16, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting minutes as drafted.

Committee Appointments

Roanoke Canal Commission

City Clerk Storey said the Roanoke Canal Commission consists of representatives appointed by the Roanoke Rapids City Council, Town of Weldon Commissioners and Halifax County Commissioners. There are currently two vacancies on the Commission who would represent the City of Roanoke Rapids. She stated they may notice on the commission roster that several elected officials represent their respective local governments on this board. Councilman Rex Stainback has requested to serve as one of the City's representatives on the Roanoke Canal Commission and submitted a volunteer application for your consideration.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant, seconded by Councilman Bell and unanimously carried to appoint Rex Stainback to the Roanoke Canal Commission. *(Councilman Stainback was recused from this vote).*

Senior Center Advisory Committee

City Clerk Storey stated the terms for Ann Gibbs, Loretta Riddick and Lisa Vincent on the Senior Center Advisory Committee expired August 2, 2024. She contacted all three individuals, and they are willing to continue serving on the committee. Ann Gibbs and Lisa Vincent have served the maximum number of two consecutive terms allowed by City Policy, but City Council has the authority to waive this section of the policy and has done so in the past. She reported City Council took a ballot vote earlier and all three received a unanimous vote to be reappointed.

Motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant and unanimously carried to waive the City Policy for Ms. Gibbs and Ms. Vincent and reappoint Ann Gibbs, Loretta Riddick and Lisa Vincent to the Senior Center Advisory Committee.

New Business

Consideration of Budget Amendment (Fire Department)

Finance Director Johnson announced ECU North has awarded the Fire Department \$9,000 to purchase two carboxyhemoglobin meters. She presented the following budget ordinance for their consideration.

**Ordinance No. 2024.18
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, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025, according to the following schedule:

SCHEDULE A – PROJECT FUND REVENUES

Fire Dept. Grant – ECU Fire Community Benefit Grant	
Project Revenues – Fire Dept.	\$9,000.00
FUND PROJECT TOTAL	\$9,000.00

SECTION 2. The following additional revenues and reductions in appropriations are available for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025, in order to meet the foregoing appropriations, according to the following schedule:

SCHEDULE B – PROJECT FUND EXPENDITURES

Fire Dept. Grant – ECU Fire Community Benefit Grant	
Project Expenditures – Fire Dept.	\$9,000.00
FUND PROJECT TOTAL	\$9,000.00

SECTION 3. This ordinance shall become effective upon adoption.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Motion was made by Councilman Strickland, seconded by Councilman Stainback and unanimously carried to adopt Budget Ordinance No. 2024.18 in the amount of \$9,000 for the ECU North Fire Community Benefit Grant.

District 2 City Councilmember Vacancy

Attorney Davis said he wanted to address the vacancy created by former Councilman Wayne Smith's resignation for District 2. He has been here since 2019, and they have been through this process several times. With a few exceptions, it is really up to City Council on how and when they want to fill this position. Council could choose to leave this seat vacant until the next election. While Council has the power to do that, it is not his suggestion nor of City staff either. There are three districts in the city and to leave the District 2 council seat vacant would leave those constituents with only one representative where there are two set out in the City Charter. With a smaller council such as theirs, with any sickness, vacations or scheduling conflicts, there could be quorum issues. It is his suggestion that Council move to fill the vacancy in a timely manner.

He said when Council fills this vacancy that person serves the remainder of the vacated person's term. He explained that the NC General Statutes provide an alternative way which is to fill the seat at the next election. The City of Roanoke Rapids does not have that available due to the City's Charter. A city charter is one of the rare circumstances where a city charter can trump the general statutes. Regarding the decision on how the vacancy is filled, the evaluation of potential interest and discussion of qualifications all must occur in open session. Council can only appoint someone that is eligible to fill the seat which in this case must live in District 2.

Attorney Davis stated there are two methods Council can use for making the final decision. How they get up to that point in soliciting interest, giving notice to the public, allowing public comment and vetting potential candidates is up to City Council. In the final decision there are ultimately two ways to fill the vacancy. The first option is a motion and vote. This method was used when Councilman Stainback, former Councilman Daughtry and Councilman Strickland were appointed. Basically, a councilmember makes motion for "Person A" be appointed to fill the District 2 vacancy created by Councilman Smith's resignation. Assuming that motion receives a second, it will go before Council for an up or down vote. In an event of a tie in that vote, the Mayor can vote to break that tie. The second option is the ballot option. That is how

they fill most committees like they did earlier in this meeting. Councilmembers are provided a ballot listing the names of interested nominees and then each member votes for one of them. There is a crucial difference in this scenario. The Mayor does not get to vote to break the tie. In the event of a tie in the ballot option, Council would through round after round of ballots until one does not result in a tie. There are the two options on how the final decision is determined. Again, in the last three times they have been through this process, they have used the motion and vote option. From his recollection for the last two appointments, the Mayor had to break a tie. Because of the prior experiences and due to the potential for a kind of embarrassing deadlock, it would be his suggestion for Council to use the motion and vote option as opposed to the ballot option in the final determination.

He stated that City Council has the authority to choose to fill the vacancy today at this meeting. He was not suggesting that, nor did he believe City staff would suggest it either. He suspects that City Council wants to solicit interest from potential candidates and constituents of District 2. They have done this in the past. City staff has prepared a draft application which is included in their packets. Council can choose to use as is or give feedback on how they would like to see it modified. Also, Council could choose to set a time in a future meeting where potential interested candidates would give presentations or discuss why they should serve in this capacity. All discussions must be in an open meeting and anything submitted to Council is a public record. As in the past, any applications or letters of interest would be included in the agenda packets of the meeting where that decision would be made.

Attorney Davis said it would be appropriate now to open it for questions and for Council to discuss how they would like to go through this process and direct City staff of the logistical aspects.

Mayor Pro Tem Bryant asked when Councilman Strickland was appointed, didn't they ask for applications.

Attorney Davis replied that was correct, but when it came to the final decision, they used the motion and vote option, not a ballot. Even with the motion and vote option, how they choose to get to that point, how they solicit interest and discuss potential candidates is up to Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Bryant said based on that she feels they need to keep it open. She does not feel it is just up to Council to appoint someone. They have people in the district that if they have the desire, Council should give them the opportunity to be considered. She would like to ask for applications and then vote. She was interested in the ballot, but she would like whoever is interested to come before Council and give

a brief overview of why they are interested in serving.

Mayor Doughtie asked if anything had been sent out yet. Attorney Davis replied staff was waiting for this meeting and this discussion. The feedback from this discussion would determine what gets sent out.

Councilman Stainback stated he would like to see the City start advertising tomorrow with the application. Those interested in District 2 should complete the application and then turn it into the City Clerk. He would like to see it open until filled. He would also like to use the motion and vote process.

Attorney Davis stated they did not need a vote tonight, but a consensus or feedback on this process. City administration would then implement that process.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they needed to set a cutoff for accepting applications. He thought Council may take it up at the next meeting if that was enough time.

Councilman Bell stated that most governmental organizations run advertisement twice in the local paper or news media; run it once every two weeks. Then they look to see what they have.

Attorney Davis replied that was the case for a lot of things when they have legal obligation as far as notice. In this case the procedures are up to Council. Council could say to have enough time, two weeks may be too short and would like to give potential interested persons enough time to get prepared. There is not a time limit on filling the vacancy although it is his suggestion for Council act in a timely fashion to do it. Advertising for a few weeks and having it on a September meeting would be appropriate.

Councilman Bell asked if they could make a motion for the time frame. Attorney Davis replied if they wanted to and if that was the consensus.

Motion was made by Councilman Bell, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant to solicit applications for the District 2 vacant council seat by advertising for at least four weeks and then look at what applications they have at the first meeting in September 2024.

Councilman Stainback questioned whether they would be able to vote the first meeting in September since they would be advertising for four weeks; it would put it six weeks before Council could vote.

Councilman Bell said that would be the Tuesday after Labor Day which would be four weeks and voting at the September 3rd meeting. Councilman Stainback said what was

hanging him up was the advertising for four weeks. Councilman Bell suggested advertising it twice in a four-week period. Councilman Strickland asked if there would be a concrete deadline for the applications.

City Manager Traynham said in looking at the calendar, City Council's regular meeting was Tuesday, September 3rd which is the day after Labor Day. She did not believe they would get the four weeks or 30 days in, especially if items need to be turned in a week ahead of time for inclusion in the agenda packets. They could consider the second meeting in September which would be Tuesday, September 17th. All applications would be due to the City Clerk the Thursday before the meeting by 12 noon. This would allow the City Clerk to verify residency and voter registration.

Mayor Pro Tem Bryant asked if they go with the September 3rd meeting, do they not agree that it would give enough time. Councilman Stainback stated he thinks that anyone interested would know by that timeframe. Mayor Pro Tem Bryant agreed.

City Manager Traynham said the Thursday prior to the September 3rd meeting would be August 29th which is a little over three weeks from today. Councilman Stainback stated he likes that idea. Mayor Pro Tem Bryant said she was in favor of the September 3rd meeting.

Councilman Bell amended his motion which was seconded by Councilman Strickland and unanimously carried to advertise the solicitation of applications for the District 2 vacant council seat with a deadline of August 29, 2024 to receive applications by and City Council will consider them during the September 3, 2024 City Council meeting.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Traynham said the Roanoke Rapids Police Department and local law enforcement agencies are participating with other law enforcement agencies across the United States in National Night Out. She invited everyone to make it out to Kirkwood Adams tonight. There will be vendors, activities and information for all ages.

She reported the Police Department and Public Works Department teamed up last week and collected and returned over 200 shopping carts to local businesses that had been taken off their premises. She applauded their efforts to help clean up and help the appearance of the city.

She announced on Saturday, August 10th at 5 p.m. at Martin Luther King Park the Sarah Keys Evans Day celebration.

City Manager Traynham said recently the Public Work Department has been working to improve the school zone painting and crosswalk markings around the schools. This helps with visibility and exciting that kids will be going back to school soon.

She said Kirkwood Adams Community Center will soon have a new electric message board sign installed. It will be good for advertising local events and events occurring at the community center.

She reported the Parks & Recreation Department has been making some minor improvements with hopes of a future renovation at Rochelle Park. The tennis courts were constructed in 1970 and have been around for about twice their anticipated age. They would like to repurpose the courts since they have been an eyesore in the neighborhood. The department has removed the fencing around the old courts and been scrapping some of the surface material away. They've had a contractor out to look at some options. An option for a grant that would possibly be available to help repurpose the courts into maybe some pickleball courts or something like that.

City Manager Traynham said the Parks & Recreation Department has ordered new replacement chairs and tables for the Lloyd Andrews Building. Summer camps have wrapped up for the season and it has been one of the busiest summers they've had since Covid. The outdoor pool at TJ Davis will close this Saturday, August 10th at 5 p.m. Industrial League softball is currently taking place on the City's athletic fields. There are five teams: two from Resers, Dominion Energy, WestRock and Roanoke Rapids Graded School District. The Chaloner Recreation Center will soon have "story walk" where there will be a book posted with pages to read. It is like a walking book so you read and walk and read and walk. The book has activities that encourage recreation and healthy lifestyles.

She reported they were keeping an eye on Tropical Storm Debby. City departments started storm prepping yesterday since they expect a lot of rain. Public Works has already started reducing some of the water in Rochelle Pond. They are aware of some of areas prone to flooding such as 10th Street at Georgia Avenue and Vine Street near the hospital. She encouraged citizens to use caution when they go out and if they see flooded streets to turn around, don't drown. Staff will post updates on social media and the City's website. Departments are clearing stormwater drains and checking generators. She said the website www.ready.gov has useful information and is a great tool for storms.

Fire Chief Patrick said a few weeks ago he and Police Chief Guyant visited New Bern to visit a local blood drive. The police and fire departments have teamed up with the Red Cross and have been doing this drive for several years to bring in new blood

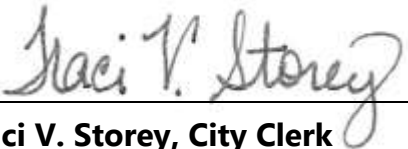
donors. He announced they are planning to do something similar on October 1, 2024 called the Battle of the Badges Blood Drive from 12 – 6 p.m. at Kirkwood Adams Community Center. Participants who give blood have the option to put a red chip (Fire Dept.) or blue chip (Police Dept.) in. It is a friendly competition. Of course, one will get more votes than the other, but the winners are the people in need of blood. The Red Cross said they typically get 60-70 pints locally when they do a blood drive. He stated their goal for this drive is 100 pints. He encouraged everyone to donate blood and for their support. He said there will be food for participants.

Mayor Doughtie asked City Manager Traynham for an update on the status of the new library sign. City Manager Traynham replied she contacted Stacy Chichester and the Chichester family. Mrs. Chichester was looking at dates in the Fall but has not finalized a date yet. The Parks & Recreation Director has been working with a vendor for the sign design that would be complimentary. She anticipates an unveiling ceremony in the Fall.

Mayor Doughtie asked why there were cones on the 200 block of Roanoke Avenue where the brick pavers are located. Public Works Director Chalker replied it may be where a light pole was struck in a traffic accident some time ago; he needed to follow up on that. He would visit the area to find out what he was talking about. Mayor Doughtie stated the brick pavers looked like they were getting unlevel. Public Works Director Chalker said they have been monitoring the brick pavers since they were installed. Unfortunately, he came onboard about halfway into that project. He feels money may be better spent to start removing some of those brick pavers and go back with some type of concrete once the budget allows for that. Brick pavers are difficult to maintain unless a concrete base is put underneath so they cannot move around a lot and that was not done with that project. Mayor Doughtie stated it was a major job for the City to undertake.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant, and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: August 20, 2024