



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

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

Andy Jackson)
Curtis Strickland)
Rex Stainback)
W. Keith Bell)

Council Members

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

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilman Bell provided an invocation. 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 Bryant, seconded by Councilman Bell, and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda as presented.

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Mr. Joey Davis

Mr. Davis stated he had some comments about the Christmas parade. He thought it was said that candy could not be thrown out to the kids on the street. He was looking out for the welfare of the kids, especially the small ones. The Avenue is packed with bands playing, everything going on and people throwing candy out of the automobiles. Anybody this day in time could stand in that crowd and throw candy out onto the street laced with God knows what. They are in that kind of world now; it's reality. Maybe there could be something done. He suggested every so often along the parade route, someone could be handing out candy safely. He was looking out for the safety of the kids. Six weeks earlier, the City hosts Trunk or Treat at the Rec where it is a safe environment for the kids to get Halloween candy, but at Christmas time they just throw it out. He hopes and prays nothing like that happens, but he wanted to bring it up because it has been on his mind.

Mayor Doughtie asked if staff could look and see if the City had a policy on that by the next meeting.

Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Councilman Jackson, and unanimously carried to approve the December 3, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting minutes as drafted.

New Business

Consideration of Budget Ordinance No. 2025.01 – OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax

Finance Director Johnson said the Police Department received some OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax money. She presented the following budget ordinance for their consideration:

**Ordinance No. 2025.01
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

Fund Balance – Police – OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax

Project Revenues - OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax	\$4,105.90
	\$3,718.75
FUND PROJECT TOTAL	\$7,824.65

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

Funding to General Fund – Police – OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax

Project Expenditures - OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax	\$4,105.90
	\$3,718.75
FUND PROJECT TOTAL	\$7,824.65

SECTION 3. This ordinance shall become effective upon adoption.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Motion was made by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant and unanimously carried to adopt Ordinance No. 2025.01 in the amount of \$7,824.65 for the OSC Unauthorized Substance Tax.

Consideration of Budget Ordinance 2025.02 – NC Amateur Youth Sports Grant

Finance Director Johnson reported that the Parks and Recreation Department applied for the NC Amateur Youth Sports Grant. They were granted \$20,000 to purchase youth sports equipment and provide facility upgrades that would benefit youth sports. She presented the following budget ordinance for their consideration:

Ordinance No. 2025.02
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

Fund Balance – P&R – N.C. Amateur Youth Sports Grant

Project Revenues - P&R – N.C. Amateur Youth Sports Grant **\$20,000.00**

FUND PROJECT TOTAL **\$20,000.00**

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

Funding to General Fund – P&R – N.C. Amateur Youth Sports Grant

Project Expenditures - P&R – N.C. Amateur Youth Sports Grant **\$20,000.00**

FUND PROJECT TOTAL **\$20,000.00**

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 Ordinance No. 2025.02 in the amount of \$20,000 for the NC Amateur Youth Sports Grant for the Parks & Recreation Department.

Department Updates

Finance

Finance Director Johnson reported the Finance Department is finished with year end and the audit. It has been submitted to the Local Government Commission and approved. She said they were making good progress with OpenGov and it is going well.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker said the Lake Pointe Drive sinkhole project City Council approved \$65,000 for is approximately 95% complete. Thus far it has been 100% funded by NCDOT. The City has not dipped into any of the funds allocated for the project. They are waiting to put asphalt back on the street where they had to dig and put new pipes in. He said they may not have to spend any City funds on that project so that is good news.

Mayor Doughtie said there was another sinkhole in that neighborhood near the one they are working on. Public Works Director Chalker said if there was another sinkhole

in that area, it would be out of the city limits. He added some of the streets there are not NCDOT either; they are private.

Public Works Director Chalker said leaf collection season is well underway. In November and December, they spent 2,300-man hours collecting leaves for a total of 3,000 cubic yards. They have already filled up one big portion of the leaf yard up again. In the last month, they have changed the way they track where the leaves are picked up, so they hope to see some better success.

Fire

Fire Chief Patrick highlighted a few items from his year-end review.

- Total of 1,000 calls.
- Staff had approximately 7,700 total man hours of training (avg. 240/year/man - which is their goal for ISO rating).
- Two (2) life saves which occurred in the last couple of months. Plan to recognize them in a February meeting.
- 4,500 people participated in Fire Prevention (face-to-face fire safety message, classes such as CPR and fire extinguisher). This is the most they have done since they started, and this is the 6th year.

He reminded City Council that back in December their inspection of the new fire engine was cancelled due to engine problems. He reported the company must have worked through the holidays because they received a call from the salesman on Friday, and he is working on a date for a crew to go down to Florida to conduct the final inspection of the fire engine. They plan to go down in a few weeks so they can move the truck forward in order to get it to Rocky Mount for upfit.

Police

Interim Police Chief Phillips announced the following department new hires:

- Destiny Rover – Graduated BLET on January 2, 2025, from Nash Community College.
- Joseph Woods – He was a law enforcement officer in Georgia. He is currently doing administrative duties. He will attend BLET in February at Nash.
- Raven Ellis – She is from Warren County. She is currently a dispatcher for Warren County and a fire fighter for Roanoke Wildwood Fire Department. She will attend BLET in February as well.
- Todd Stephenson started on December 30, 2024. He was a Deputy for Northampton County and is already BLET certified. They are waiting to receive his certification.
- Roger Jenkins was hired part-time. He worked for the City before and the Halifax County Sheriff's Office.

He reported the following 2024 stats:

- 98 firearms seized
- 2,959 reports taken
- 804 wreck reports
- 753 community service hours
- 1,787 citations written
- 855 arrests
- 3,476 training hours
- 1,559 animal calls
- 22,461 total calls for service

Mayor Doughtie asked why the law enforcement officer from Georgia had to attend BLET. Interim Chief Phillips replied he could come over and challenge the state test. Pre-2025 there was a 96-hour block they had to take to transfer certification from one state to another. Depending on what state they were going to whether they would accept another state or not. Fortunately, NC is one of the states where they will accept a transfer, but they still have to do the hours. Mr. Woods considered doing that at first, however the BLET Legacy training hours and curricula have increased. He would be better off to go through the whole training to get everything he needed and would not be behind in NC law. He added they talked extensively with him about what he wanted to do. He has a military background and feels he will do well.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Daughtry reported the following activities from December.

- Christmas on the Avenue (Centennial Park, Chamber and 1026 Roanoke Avenue) – 500 attended.
- Christmas at the Canal at the Canal Museum – 75 attended.
- Roanoke Rapids Christmas Parade – estimated 4,000 participants and spectators.
- Grinchy Christmas reading event at the Gilbert Chichester Memorial Library – 78 attended.
- Christmas Social at the Jo Storey Senior Center – 44 attended.

She reported with all the events and activities such as basketball, they had a total of 22,703 contacts in the Parks & Recreation Department.

Parks & Recreation Director Daughtry said for athletics, they have youth basketball going on with 200 kids playing. Their games are in December and January. Then they will roll into the Industrial League basketball which starts in February. They will begin

taking registration for spring sports such as t-ball, soccer, baseball and softball that runs through March.

She stated as for Occupancy Tax funding, she believed there was some money left over from last year, so they have a total of \$114,000. These funds will be spent on the Canal Museum & Trail operations. They will replace the tennis court at Rochelle Park with three pickle ball courts. Four scoreboards will be replaced at Ledgerwood because they have been having some issues. The Parks & Recreation Department will be hosting a twenty plus team tournament in July plus with youth baseball, this will allow things to run much smoother.

Parks & Recreation Director Daughtry announced the Parks & Recreation Department was awarded the following grants:

- \$20,000 through NC Amateur Youth Sports – Funds will be used to replace two scoreboards a Chockoyotte Park.
- \$5,000 archery grant for equipment and training two employees. They will start archery classes in the TJ Davis gym in late February.
- \$1,000 NC Recreation & Parks Association for New Initiatives Grant. They were able to purchase wood carving tools and materials. They hope to start wood carving classes in March.

Mayor Pro Tem Bryant asked what age group qualifies for the archery and wood carving classes. Parks & Recreation Director Daughtry replied they will start the archery classes age at 10-15 years. This age group is more difficult to capture in other activities they offer. As they go, they plan to add more age groups. The wood working classes would start at the Senior Center. Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Ryan Newsome is very experienced and has won ribbons with wood carving. He would like to start with adults because of the knives and carving tools to see how that goes. He would like to learn and develop some skills before he starts with classes for children. She noted they would have different tools for children and probably start with soap and progress up to the wood.

Councilman Jackson asked if they had any plans for the old tennis courts at Emry Park. She replied there is a group in the community that has been raising funds for replacing a portion of that area with a beginner skate park. The City has designated some funding towards the project as well. There is a gap between what the City has designated and what they have raised so they continue to do fundraisers.

Mayor Doughtie stated TJ Davis Recreation Center is looking really old – interior and exterior. He knows it would take right much money to make it look better. He asked for her and her staff to bring some ideas and get some cost estimates on painting the upper roof of the gym, the facade and parking lot. She reported that she and staff sat

down on Monday to develop and prioritize some things they would like to see and do in the next six months as well as immediate things. Some of those include things that need to be renovated and upgraded. They would also obtain cost estimates so they could include those requests in the upcoming budget. City Council would then decide what they would like to move forward with.

Planning

Planning & Development Director Anderson reported from January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024, the Planning & Development Department issued 904 permits, conducted 1,248 inspections and collected \$285,013.46 in revenue.

She said the owners of the former Carolina Inn, so named The Dogwood Inn, have been in contact with development entities regarding clean up and revitalization of the property. Currently the property has been stripped of all old items, and nuisance landscaping cleared. Engineered plans and a licensed general contractor are required before proceeding.

Planning & Development Director Anderson updated City Council about the following projects:

- The Toyota dealership located at 1836 Premier Blvd (along the Premier Blvd extension) has received temporary power and is in the process of completing overhead inspections.
- Stateside Landing Apartments along East Littleton Road steadily progresses forward. Most recent inspections included footings, under slabs and installation of temporary power poles.
- Express Oil Change site located along Premier Boulevard will begin site work any day now.
- The development of 71 townhomes within the Cross Creek subdivision development is much closer to its final approval. NCDOT can't issue the final permit for the roadway improvements until a \$250,000 bond is placed with their office. Given that construction is planned to start in March 2025 the bond will be placed prior to construction starting in NCDOT's right of way.

Mayor Pro Tem Bryant asked if the townhomes were going to be for rent or for sale. Planning & Development Director Anderson replied the owner of the property has developed them here previously and they sold. Her understanding is that his intent is the same.

Mayor Doughtie asked if she had an update on the McCrory building. She replied she did not at this time, however she will check with them and get back to him.

Human Resources

Human Resources Director Caudle said as of January 1, 2025, the City has seven (7) full-time vacancies. The current job opportunities are advertised on the City's website, all City facilities and with local media partners. Since July 1, 2024, they welcomed thirteen (13) new hires that are still active as of today. Since Christmas, they have brought on six (6) full-time and part-time employees. Interim Chief Phillips mentioned they have brought on a couple of BLET cadets and certified patrol officers. As of this week, they've hired an experienced sanitation operator. They continue to do well with recruiting quality applicants and hires.

She stated employee retention rates continue to dramatically improve. She reminded City Council that in FY22-23 the turnover rate was terrible at 44.44%, then it dropped to 17.91% last fiscal year (FY23-24). After the first six months of this current year, the turnover rate has further decreased to 9.42% so they are moving in the right direction.

Human Resources Director Caudle reported the following demographics for current full-time employees:

- 78% male / 22% female
- 73% while / 27% non-white (26% being African American)
- 41 years old – Average employee age
- 9.68 years – Average years of City service

She stated the Pay & Classification Study with the MAPS Group is still on track. It seems to be a long time between the time they came on-site, and the time employees completed their surveys. They are still expecting to complete that project by late winter 2025. With NeoGov, all the core human resource products were in implementation, and they have timed implementation to be in line with OpenGov so there is no lapse in finance and payroll operations. They launched the first of four modules before the holidays and will launch the remaining three over the next few months. By the end of the fiscal year they should be live on the new operating system.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Traynham thanked the department heads for their updates.

She announced the City currently has a public bidding opportunity. The City is soliciting sealed bids for the FY2025 Asphalt Overlay Project which is street resurfacing to be funded with the allocation from the NC Powell Bill program. Sealed

bids will be opened immediately after the 10:00 a.m. submittal deadline on Thursday, January 30, 2025.

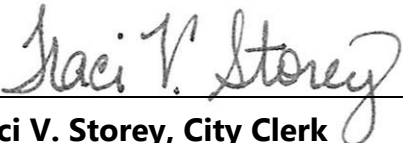
City Manager Traynham said having the permit approvals in place for the 71 townhomes in the Cross Creek subdivision is a big accomplishment. She acknowledged Planning & Development Director Anderson's efforts. They met with the developer over three years ago when she was still the Planning Director and Ms. Anderson sat in on those meetings. There have been a lot of "no's". Planning & Development Director Anderson's persistence and ability to communicate that with the developer and other entities that they work for in the administrative review process has come to fruition. They look forward to the development of the new townhomes within the city limits.

She reported several staff members from different departments will participate in a program offered by the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG) in their Regional Artificial Intelligence (AI) Pilot Program, as well as its new AI Academy, which will take place concurrently to support local governments in learning how to effectively use AI tools. She said there was no cost to the City or member governments to participate in the program. There was an orientation on December 10th. A sample AI policy will be provided for consideration by the City Council. There will be six (6) training sessions that will start this month. It will help local governments learn more about engineering, responsible AI use and tools like ChatGPT as well as public record requirements. She commended UCPCOG for taking the leadership on this.

City Manager Traynham said UCPCOG is also in the process of gathering interest in a Drone Technology Program. They are seeking participants from local governments for a small fee. To use drones in the City's day-to-day operations, there has to be a certified drone pilot. This will assist the City in using drones for inspections, code enforcement, environmental monitoring, check out resources that are hard to obtain and reach. There are many uses for that. She referred to the back page of her report that list different ways the City could benefit from drone technologies.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Bell, seconded by Councilman Stainback and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: January 21, 2025