



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A special meeting (Budget Work Session) of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Thursday, May 9, 2019 at 5:15 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)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order.

Parks & Recreation

City Manager Scherer asked for Parks & Recreation Director John Simeon to review his budget requests with City Council.

T.J. Davis Recreation Center

Fire Alarm Panel: \$7,000

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated this panel was basically the box and computer that communicates with 9-1-1. This was the original control panel from the 2000 renovation but it is not connecting to 9-1-1 at this point. If they were to have fire obviously they would not have any response. The Fire Marshal has requested the control panel be replaced and brought up to code.

Officials: Extra \$7,000

He said they have had several requests from the community to offer additional adult softball and basketball leagues. This funding will be offset by collecting the fees

that they charge for these leagues. For every adult league they offer, they recoup all the direct costs back.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how old the fire panel was. He replied it was the 2000 renovation. The company that made it is no longer in business and they cannot even access the monitor to see what is going on.

Aquatic Center

Steel Doors: \$6,000

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said these were the steel doors on the side facing the outdoor pool and were the original 1991 emergency side exit doors. They are completely rusted through at this point.

Mayor Doughtie asked how many doors were there. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied two. Councilman Smith questioned that they would cost \$3,000 per door. He replied that was correct; the quote was received by NC Glass. Mayor Doughtie asked if those doors had to be there and had to be steel. He replied yes, they were the fire escape doors and for that application, he thought it would be best if they were steel. Any other doors in that environment were not going to weather very well. He did not see an alternative, but would be happy to look at one.

Mayor Doughtie asked if he knew whether code required the doors to be steel. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied he did not know, he would assume that it was since they were installed in 1991.

Kirkwood Adams Community Center

HVAC Control Panel: \$30,700

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said it was an outdated 2003 HVAC control panel that is giving them some operational difficulties at this time. They were in the same scenario again that replacement parts do not exist for this particular panel. If the control panel completely fails the building will need to be shut down for an extended period of time. This concerns him because if they have to shut the building down it could affect someone's rental such as a family reunion or wedding reception that they have planned for over a year.

Carpet: \$25,000

He said the carpeting is 15 years old, it is worn and severely stained from years of use. The traffic flow for this carpeting is over 315,000 patrons since it was installed 15 years ago.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if it would be better to not have carpet and have a different kind of flooring. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied yes and it could be similar to what was done here in this building. They replaced the carpeting with composite tile flooring. That could be an option, but one of the concerns will be when someone is speaking in that building, it was going to really echo. He felt the trade off in cost may be worth it. She suggested hanging fabric to help with the sound.

Mayor Doughtie said he has always had a difficult time hearing speakers there because the air-conditioning/heat runs all the time. He did not see why panels could not be hung to help with the sound and install the same flooring as in this building. He said most of the events there were people eating and drinking so the carpeting gets stained easily.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated that if he recalled correctly, there was not a big difference between the cost of the tile flooring installed here and carpet. City Manager Scherer agreed but noted that tile would still be fairly expensive. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said they could also do vinyl which would save a fair amount of money.

They discussed the life of the flooring and ease of cleaning the composite tile. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he would ask for comparisons between tile and vinyl before moving forward.

Partial Table Replacement: \$2,000 and Partial Chair Replacement: \$5,000

He said the chairs were from 1975 and have held up very well. Tables are not made as durable as they once were. They were getting to the point where they cannot set up for the fire code capacity of 900. Right now they are only able to accommodate 700 with tables and chairs. The wear and tear on the tables and chairs are starting to have affects. They want to start building that back up so they do not get hit all at one time. The chairs are \$75 each.

Fire Alarm System Repair: \$25,000

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said the fire alarm system is not working at all. They have an employee that signs on as a fire watch every time someone goes in the building. They are in the same situation where the replacement parts are not available for this system either. The Fire Marshal has been in to look at it and has requested full replacement to bring it up to code. Full replacement calls for audible and visual pull stations, lights, wiring and control panel.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they put the money in the budget for this and the doors, would he get other prices. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied he would. The quote for the fire alarm replacement system came from Secure Solutions who is here in town and monitors just about all of the Parks & Recreation buildings. There is another company that does that and when they did the Jo Story Center with grant dollars, they did get two quotes – both local. He said the HVAC quote came from Allred out of Rocky Mount. They currently use them for preventive maintenance and have them on a cycle, quarterly, annually or biannually depending on which building. They would get other prices for that one also.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many times has Kirkwood Adams been completely full or more than three-quarters full. He replied it does a lot in the fall when the Christmas parties start coming in and some weddings – he would say 20-25% it is at maximum.

Councilman Bobbitt asked what part of the chairs were breaking the most, the legs, seats or hinges. He replied it was a little of everything, they are from 1975.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked how many tables was he anticipating changing over. He replied said they could change over approximately twenty (20) tables.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if it was a general rule for them to get more than one quote. He replied yes and they did do that at the Jo Story Senior Center – they were both local. Mayor Doughtie asked if the quotes were close. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied no. Mayor Doughtie said as in the case of the steel doors if someone questions the price of \$6,000, you want to be able to say you got a couple of prices.

Mayor Doughtie said if Council appropriated the money for the HVAC system and fire alarm at Kirkwood Adams, could he look for grant opportunities as soon as possible like the he did for the Senior Center HVAC, then hold off on spending the money. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied the Senior Center gets several grants annually to help with the center so they were able to use one of those because it fit that particular grant. He said he would be happy to look at some grants but he was concerned that if the system did fail, someone would have a difficult time finding another venue at the last minute. Mayor Doughtie said Kirkwood Adams was the only facility for the City of Roanoke Rapids to hold functions like that and it really needs to be fixed from a safety standpoint.

Trail Maintenance

\$15,000 (Requested by HCCVB Budget)

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said they have some bridge repair that needs to be done and some signage replacement on the Canal Trail. They have half of a tractor trailer, they have used it before for bridges. Grayson Mitchell has offered to donate another one to them. They have one bridge that is failing at this point and it is located near WestRock. He was hoping WestRock may be able to give some assistance.

Councilman Smith said he thought the City just cut the grass on the trail, he did not know they repaired the Canal Trail; he thought that was up to the Canal Commission. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied the contract that they have is the City maintains the day-to-day operations. They had some come forward from the Canal Commission and ask if there were monies there that could help them. The Canal Commission does not have a lot of money to do these things. He thought this was an opportunity to use some of that money to help with these repairs that need to be taken care of.

Councilman Smith said he was asking for an increase in his budget of \$169,000 and the request before them is for \$108,000. He asked what he was going to use the other \$68,000 for. City Manager Scherer replied they were increases in personnel costs and additional maintenance costs. What he has highlighted for them was the major issues or expenses that were in this year's budget request. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon added these requests are in the minor equipment budget line item; there were no increases in operational costs.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the inside walking track was a high use device. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied yes and they go in cycles with weather. He said they have 10-12 daily walkers. Councilman Bobbitt asked what was the rough estimate to replace the flooring of the inside walking track. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied he would have to take a look at it because it is a sport court and it is like a puzzle you put together. If you have bad areas, you can replace that bad area. They have replacement tiles on hand to do that.

Public Works

Public Works

Radio System Upgrade: \$4,000

Public Works Director Chalker stated originally this line item was \$7,000 but because of previous budget cuts, it was cut to \$3,000. Public Works is responsible for communications City-wide. They hope to have this \$7,000 set aside for repeater

maintenance, radio tower maintenance, voting equipment maintenance for the Police Department. He noted the Police Department has a line item in their budget with the same type of funding. Public Works assists them in administering because they support all departments and radio systems in the City. If there is a problem they call Public Works then they call the contractors and technicians. The additional \$4,000 is to restore that to previous levels. There is some routine maintenance with the radio systems.

Street

Maintenance: Extra \$8,000

Public Works Director Chalker stated maintenance was a pretty large account in the Street Department. It is a general catch all account and it is a lot of money in that line. They are asking to increase it by \$8,000 because they know they have aging infrastructure throughout the city.

Curb & Gutter: Extra \$4,000 and Sidewalks: Extra \$3,000

He said this is the same as the maintenance line item. They have done more sidewalk work this year and have had to pull money out of other line items to supplement these line items. They have more residents noticing the sidewalks are getting that separation and causing trip hazards. They have also had more accidents reported to them by the public for tripping on the sidewalks so they are trying to be more responsive to that.

Maintain Reaches: Extra \$5,000

Public Works Director Chalker said this is a clean water maintenance fund. Typically per year they spend \$10,000 on Reach 1 which is the ditch behind Grayson Mitchell's residence that carries most of the water from Becker Farms from the pipe from Becker Village Mall and that area. It carries a very large amount of water during a rainwater event through Grayson Mitchell's property to the Roanoke River. The City has a perpetual easement there and basically a responsibility to maintain this perpetually. This year because of the sink hole on 5th Street, they had to pull that \$10,000 along with other accounts to perform the repairs on 5th Street because they did not have that in their original budget ordinance. So since they did not spend the \$10,000 on it last year, it is a good chance they may have to spend a little more on the routine maintenance this year. He noted Mr. Mitchell has been very understanding, they have a very good relationship with him.

Resurfacing/Patching Old Farm Road: Extra \$150,000

He called attention to the Old Farm Road Rehabilitation of \$300,000. He said the original resurfacing/patching amount was \$150,000 and they are requesting an additional \$150,000 to that line item for a total of \$300,000 for all the resurfacing

and patching city-wide. He noted when they talk about resurfacing, they are not talking about potholes, and they would be paving the street in its entirety for one block or for more than one block. Old Farm Road was done several years ago by the Street Maintenance Department and Public Works as a whole and Rightmyer Machine Rentals. Because of the current condition of Old Farm Road and certain sections of it, they were becoming increasingly concerned about the condition of the asphalt and how long the asphalt was going to last. They have talked to some people from NCDOT and asphalt companies that are familiar with high volume traffic streets/roads and they have told them it was a good time to add asphalt to Old Farm Road to strengthen that road surface. He said when Old Farm Road was originally rehabilitated they had no idea they would see the traffic volumes that they see now. It has been a thoroughfare through what was just a residential district. A lot of traffic enters the city and ends up on Old Farm Road cutting across as opposed to the typical routes. He said the extra \$150,000 would be used exclusively to recondition most of Old Farm Road. He said the question now for City Manager Scherer and Finance Director Etheridge was do we put that \$300,000 to a capital line item or leave it in the expense budget.

Stormwater Pipe Replacement: \$65,000 (Fund 12 – Capital Projects)

Public Works Director Chalker said the stormwater pipe replacement is going to be the one on Rollingwood Road. They have received several requests and complaints from residents on Rollingwood Road that in heavy rain conditions the two pipes were not handling the capacity of the rain. It has been on their radar for the last six to seven years that the bottoms of those two corrugated metal pipes have rusted out. They are getting at the critical stage that the two pipes need to be replaced. The primary need for the replacement is because the bottoms of the pipes have rusted. The secondary need is if they are going to replace them, they need to add capacity in order to carry more water through. Once the water passes Rollingwood, it is a direct route to the Roanoke River.

Councilman Smith asked if instead of putting pipes back in there, were they thinking about putting in concrete so it would be wide open through there. Public Works Director Chalker said have asked Nick Rightmyer and they believe the \$65,000 will cover a modular culvert. That is more typical but they have to make sure they get the right type and they do increase capacity while staying within the budget line item. If the market changes and it would cost over \$100,000, they would be forced to go back to pipe; he would never go back with metal corrugated pipe – they do not do that anymore. They would use reinforced concrete or modular precast concrete.

9th & Park Drainage Improvements: \$170,000 (Fund 12 – Capital Projects)

He said this was a project they suggested about five years ago. In heavier rain conditions, the water begins to collect at 9th and Allen Avenue. There are some apartments over there that have flooded a couple of times. These apartments were originally built on too low of an elevation in the 1970s. They have also noticed that the system that carries that water from 9th and Allen Avenue goes behind a bunch of peoples' backyards and turns a 90 degree angle and goes down by the Manning School track and it crosses under Park Avenue. That system is a problem system. It is an old system and there are several different types of pipe and the system is beginning to fail. He and Nick Rightmyer have talked about it and they would much rather take the water down 9th Street and cross Park Avenue at 9th Street and go across the back of Manning School property which the school system has agreed to let them do. They would just be taking the water a different route to the same drainage basin. This would not carry water behind those peoples' houses. They could leave the old system in place and make some patches to it and use it as an overflow system in extreme flood conditions. One of the end benefits of this would allow the owners of the apartments at 9th & Allen Avenue, at their expense, tie into the system and prevent their flooding conditions. He would not recommend them tie on to the existing system. This project has been on the radar for some time and he knows the current system is starting to fail; they are starting to see sink holes in peoples' back yards. They do have an easement through there. He would rather spend money on a newer system that is functional as opposed to patching up an older system.

Solid Waste

Tipping Fees: Extra \$50,000

Public Works Director Chalker said when they pick up the trash in town on the trash truck and take it to Weldon to the transfer station and cross the scales they charge per ton; they do this every day. At the beginning of the year the rates were \$51 per ton. Out of the blue, they sent them a bill and the rate had gone up to \$57 per ton. Through some negotiations, the rate will be \$54 per ton at the beginning of the fiscal year. So they know the rate will go up \$3 per ton. That does not take into consideration any further market fluctuation. When he inherited this budget from the previous director, they had a very large ceiling in each one of these line items for market fluctuations. He stated that at the end of the year they would use that extra money to balance any deficits in their budget and they used that money to balance budgets across the whole City. Through tighter budgets this headroom was cut out. The market has stayed stable for a good while so that was a good practice, but now that they are starting to see some market fluctuation in solid waste, they feel the need to put this extra money back in there; it is not even as much as before.

Refuse

Tipping Fees: Extra \$10,000

He said the refuse tipping fees come from refuse/junk or whatever the knucklebooms pick up in the alleys. (Items that do not go in the green cans). It also goes to the transfer station in Weldon and across the same scales.

Equipment Maintenance & Repair: Extra \$10,000

Public Works Director Chalker said the equipment is items on the truck that are not part of the chaise or engine.

Vehicle Maintenance & Repair: Extra \$6,000

He said this is for the actual truck - tires, drive shaft, engine etc. This is the knuckleboom fleet. He said the last time they bought a knuckleboom was in 2013. These machines move and pick up things every day. This is not a request for a new knuckleboom; they are requesting this to maintain the existing fleet.

Leaf Machine: \$35,000

He said they were asking for a new leaf machine. He said when he first started with Public Works, leaf machines were about \$12,000. The cost of these machines have increased to \$35,000 because of the emissions that were required on the diesel engines that run the machine plus the computers. Public Works has four leaf machines in service at all times and they typically try to have a spare in case one goes down. During leaf season it takes all of the fleet, depending on the weather and available crews.

Property Maintenance

Mosquito Fogger: \$13,000

Public Works Director Chalker said they purchased a mosquito fogger last year. The cost of the machine is \$13,000. It is a gasoline engine so it does not have all the emissions on it. Public Works needs two machines to cover the city properly during mosquito fogging which should start very soon. The second machine they have will not pass State calibration. The two machines they had before they purchased the one last year were purchased in 2000. They last a long time.

Mayor Doughtie asked what causes the fluctuation on the price of tipping fees. Public Works Director Chalker replied there were several things that can cause it to fluctuate and fuel was definitely frontline to one of those costs and federal fuel taxes can impact it also. The transfer station only takes it off where they dump it and then they load it onto tractor trailers to a regional landfill. They used to have a regional landfill here in Halifax County and about 20 years ago Halifax County decided they needed to close it. About that same time regional landfills started

popping up. There is one in Bertie County, Virginia Beach and Lawrenceville, Virginia. So the transportation costs from the carrier based on inflation and insurance costs affects the bottom line on this price. Then the costs of the landfill where it is delivered to on labor, insurance and things the City is faced with, fluctuate their costs up and down. Once a year and sometimes more depending on the economy will come out with an across the board adjustment. That adjustment filters down. These prices have been stable for 5-6 years now so they have not had to go through this. Before he came along, Public Works had a tremendous amount of price fluctuations with solid waste and there was consideration of the City opening their own transfer station in order to control that cost. He said they still have all the numbers from back then. They met with Halifax County in a joint municipal meeting and the County decided they were going to build a transfer station. There is one in Halifax County that used to be the landfill. That is something that they look at. They have talked to Halifax County about the possibility of them giving us a price to use their transfer station.

Mayor Doughtie asked who uses the County one. Public Works Director Chalker replied the County and county residents, some contractors and from time to time, Unity or other trash services may decide to use it. It all depends on how close it is for them to go there as opposed to going to Weldon or a regional landfill. A regional landfill is always going to be cheaper than a transfer station.

Councilman Smith asked if the fees the City was charging was covering our costs. Public Works Director Chalker replied it is, he and Finance Director Etheridge keep a finger on that pulse. Part of the fee schedule this year was going to include a request to increase the solid waste fee. They would rather increase it gradually through the years as opposed to going five or six years and then dumping a big increase at one time.

City Manager Scherer added there were a number of years the City did not raise the costs of the solid waste fees, but they raised it three years ago. Public Works Director Chalker said they started three years ago and have been trying to keep it on track with the economy and City costs.

Administrative

City Manager Scherer reported that all departments under Administration are trying to hold the line on costs.

Appearance Improvement Nuisance Abatement - \$10,000

City Manager Scherer stated he was requesting a budget of \$10,000 for an appearance improvement and abatement program. He was looking at a two-fold approach.

1. Staff developed plan for team deployment across the City to identify properties, coordinate with property owners and/or residents for cooperation and abatement on a regularly scheduled basis throughout the year. There would be a team deployed to do that. The team would consist of code enforcement and nuisance inspectors as well as a police officer. Worst case is they would have to utilize Public Works resources to assist with abatement activities as needed. Money would be needed to provide for overtime costs whether it was the inspection team or public works resources. And as Public Works Director Chalker mentioned, they would need additional money for tipping fees for the trash or white appliances they would have to haul to the dump.

2. Provide funding to assist business owners with a 50/50 match window replacement for Roanoke Avenue commercial properties only.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked Main Street Director Caudle if the Main Street organization statewide had funds to help with the replacement of the windows. She replied no, the State does not have any funding sources do things like window replacement. They did at one time have a Main Street Solutions Fund but it was based on full-time job creation. There was a formula like \$20,000-\$25,000 for every full time job created. That program was not re-funded as part of this current year's fiscal budget. The Governor's budget has included what they now call a RISE program which is basically a retooled Main Street Solutions fund. But it again is based on full-time job creation which is difficult for some small businesses. The other issue with that is a lot of them are existing businesses that need that assistance to improve the appearance of their building overall. Or it is legacy property owners that are two, three or even fourth generation ownership that may not be inclined to put all the money in but if the City were able to incentivize them it may turn the scale and have this current generation feel the need to up fit their building. There are two big reasons for that. One, there is a theory about crime prevention through environmental design or the broken window theory. So if you can replace these windows the overall theory would be that not only does it improve the appearance of your buildings in the main thoroughfare of the city but it may also reduce some of the crime issues. The other piece they have seen are buildings that are improved and they become available, they move much quicker so they are able to attract and commit new businesses into buildings that have had some up fit work versus some that have sat stagnate for many years.

Main Street Director Caudle said the Town of Lexington started a window replacement incentive program in 2015. They started with a very small amount, \$15,000 a year. They have increased it because they have seen such big success. As of now they are able to attribute about \$5 million in additional up fit costs from the private sector that utilized this small grant program. Lexington is a very comparative community to the City of Roanoke Rapids.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked since the budget has not been approved yet and it is not certain if this item will be in it, is it premature to talk with some of the property owners to see if they would be willing to do this. Main Street Director Caudle replied she did not think so and thought it would be worth the time. She said the Main Street non-profit has a façade grant that is typically used for exterior paint, awning or addition. So windows tend to fall to the side of that because they want to brighten or lively up their entry ways. But almost always the window conversation comes up when talking with those businesses. She stated if Council was interested, she thinks they should definitely spend some time in the next week or so to see if they could commit people. Councilwoman Scarbrough stated she would like to know if the merchants were interested.

Mayor Doughtie asked if property owners don't do anything about the broken windows, could the City not put some pressure on them. He thinks it is a disgrace to have a few people on the Avenue spending their money, time and effort and then beside them or across the street is a building sitting there for years with a \$200 window broken out or a sheet of plywood up. They were not talking about a lot of money. Most of them are businesses that are not open or they don't live in town so they don't care.

City Manager Scherer stated he was looking at increasing the fines for those type of offenses so that may help motivate some people to say it would be cheaper to fix it. Mayor Doughtie asked if the City had a fine for that right now. City Manager Scherer said no, that is why he said the City needed to start implementing and making it worth their time to consider fixing those things. Main Street Director Caudle added that if the City actively code enforces with fines like City Manager Scherer mentioned, she thinks they will see results.

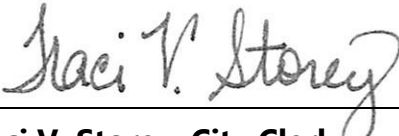
Mayor Doughtie said like the people that get a building permit, tear the side of a house off and leave it forever. He was not talking about someone building something new, it was generally those saying they were going to fix it up. They find out that it won't pass electrical or has termite problems so they walk away from it. City Manager Scherer asked if he was talking about like a performance bond commitment or something like that when the permit was issued. Mayor Doughtie

said that would be nice. For instance, when people buy a large facility and it is possible that it could come back on the taxpayers to take it down. He was not sure if that was legal to do something like that. City Manager Scherer said they would look into it.

Councilman Smith said it was his understanding when they started Main Street that they would take care of a lot of this and the City would not have to put so much money in it. Then they came to us and wanted the City to hire an employee which we did and now they are coming back and want money to replace windows. He asked what was Main Street doing now. City Manager Scherer said Main Street did not request this. It was mentioned to him and he thought it was a good idea so he wanted to put it in the budget as a City plan. He said this was not a Main Street request.

Mayor Doughtie asked Main Street Director Caudle if a building on the Avenue had a few broken windows, say it was going to be \$2,000, are we far along enough to say, "we'll do this if you'll do that" kind of thing or would the City pay the whole \$2,000. She replied with the Main Street non-profit board's façade grant they would match dollar for dollar including window replacement up to a maximum of \$2,000 and they have the funding to do that. But it is ultimately up to owner if they are going to do it or not. For a dollar for dollar match, businesses can do up to a \$4,000 exterior improvement. This would be a separate grant that the City is requesting so the Main Street board hasn't had anything to do with this portion. It is just separating out the window piece which would make a tremendous beautification improvement along Roanoke Avenue. She said the Main Street board would continue their façade grant which is completely separate and managed by them. If the City had this, someone could potentially pair both. She believed this program was a 50/50 match but she did not know what the cap would be and was not sure if the details had been determined at this point. City Manager Scherer said he was just looking to fund both of these concepts so if it only funded a small amount of windows, it was better than nothing. They could look at retooling it for next year or reallocate money if it was working; this was just a start for the program.

There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: May 21, 2019