



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 21, 2020 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)
Sandra W. Bryant)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Charles Vaught, Captain/Acting Police Chief
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Bobby Martin, Police Chief
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with prayer.

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members if there were any additions, corrections or any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening.

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for January 21, 2020 with the addition of item b) under New Business - Modification of the Agreement with G and T Holdings.

Special Recognitions

Gilbert Chichester

Mayor Doughtie read and presented the following Resolution of Appreciation for Gilbert Chichester:

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester began his tenure as City Attorney for the City of Roanoke Rapids in January 2008 and retired December 31, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester was instrumental in assisting with the renegotiation with Bank of America of the Roanoke Rapids Theatre bond financing package, thereby leading to the City being in a long-term viable and improved financial position; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester provided timely and expert legal services to assist the City in reaching an agreement to sell the Roanoke Rapids Theatre to a private interest group, thereby contributing to the economic development viability of the Music Entertainment District; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester's technical skills and sound legal practices he displayed in planning, coordinating and implementing the diverse requirements of the City's legal affairs program provided commendable results in many complex situations, thereby gaining the respect and confidence of all the City's officials for his depth of knowledge, sound judgment and high ethical principles; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester's sound knowledge of civil proceedings, litigation, real estate matters and land use and zoning issues were considered prime assets to the City's mission accomplishment; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester's honesty and integrity, coupled with his sterling professional competence and leadership ability, always generated immediate confidence from City Council and other City officials in his legal opinions and actions; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Chichester displayed a sustained superior performance without equal as our City Attorney, being that one individual in an organization whom everyone routinely relied on to solve difficult problems or demanding situations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Roanoke Rapids City Council, does hereby express its deep gratitude and appreciation to Gilbert Chichester for his 11 years of wise counsel and advice to the City of Roanoke Rapids and wishes him only the best for his future endeavors.

ADOPTED this 21st day of January, 2020.

BY: _____
Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Mayor Doughtie also presented Mr. Chichester a plaque and key to the City for his distinguished and dedicated service to the City of Roanoke Rapids from January 2008 to December 2019.

Mr. Chichester expressed his sincere appreciation for the City of Roanoke Rapids allowing him to serve. Everybody that he knows loves to do a job and do it well. Secondly, if they have done that, they like to be appreciated for the job well done. This is recognition from the City Council for what he hopes was a job well done. He grew up on a farm fifteen miles from here when there was no machinery. They shook peanuts by hand, picked cotton by hand and primed tobacco by hand. He did not think it was a hard life. The reason he didn't was because both of his parents worked right beside him and when they put us to bed at night both got in a car and came to Roanoke Rapids just a few blocks from here and worked in the cotton mills from 11:00 at night until 7:00 the next morning. He did not think his life was difficult because he saw what they did to raise a family. The reason he was bringing this up was because many of the City Council members are retired and some of them still work and they are here serving this community over and above the call of duty. He has had the opportunity to work with them and every one of them has gained his utmost respect. There is always going to be people that criticize you for anything, no matter what you do or how you do it. It has been an absolute pleasure to work for these people and every department head including City Manager Scherer. He and the new city attorney, Geoffrey Davis, are law partners, but he is also blessed to call him a friend. He feels the City is in good legal hands. He again wanted to express his appreciation.

Fire Department Promotions & New Hire Ceremony

Fire Chief Patrick recognized the following promotions:

- ◆ **Michael Butts** – promoted from Deputy Fire Marshal to *Fire & Life Safety Coordinator*. He was pinned by his wife Sarah.
- ◆ **Kenneth Hollowell** – promoted from Battalion Chief to *Deputy Fire Marshal*. He was pinned by his mother Patricia.
- ◆ **Will Harris** – promoted from Firefighter to *Engineer*. He was pinned by his father William “BJ” Harris.
- ◆ **Austin Jarrett** – Firefighter to *Engineer*. He was pinned by his mother Tammy.

- ◆ **Ben Clements** – Firefighter to *Engineer*. He was pinned by Kenneth Hollowell.

He introduced the following new hire:

- ◆ **James Bolton** – Hired in August 2019. His wife Anne Marie pinned his badge.

Police Department Promotion & New Hires

Captain Vaught announced Jayme Shelburne was recently promoted to Master Officer. Unfortunately Officer Shelburne could not attend the meeting.

Captain Vaught introduced two new officers who recently graduated from BLET: Samuel Langley and Derrick Bonner. They are awaiting their certification paperwork from the State in order to officially be Police Officers and begin their 12 weeks of field training.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the January 7, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes as drafted.

New Business

Consideration of Ordinance Declaring a Road Closure for the Twilight Festival

Main Street Director Caudle presented the following Ordinance No. 2020.01 declaring a road closure for the Twilight Festival on April 24, 2020 for City Council's consideration:

ORDINANCE NO. 2020.01

AN ORDINANCE DECLARING A ROAD CLOSURE FOR TWILIGHT FESTIVAL

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges that festivals provide economic and social benefits to our community; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges festivals attract visitors to our community and foster community pride for our citizens; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges the Twilight Festival requires approximately thirty (30) minutes to install signing and traffic control, and also requires approximately thirty (30) minutes for removing signs, traffic control and litter;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids pursuant to the authority granted by G.S. 20-169 that they do hereby declare a temporary road closure during the day(s) and times set forth below on the following described portion of a State Highway System route:

Date(s): Friday, April 24, 2020

Times: 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Route Description: Roanoke Avenue (NC 48) between 11th Street and 9th Street

This ordinance to become effective when signs are erected giving notice of the limits and times of the event, and implementation of adequate traffic control to guide through vehicles around the event route.

ADOPTED this 21st day of January 2020.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

She stated in light of changes by NCDOT regarding closures of state roads for special events, it is necessary to adopt an ordinance in order to close Roanoke Avenue (NC 48) between 11th Street and 9th Street for the Twilight Festival on April 24, 2020. She said the 2020 festival is in partnership with Hope for Hardy which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit working in the community to bring awareness of the importance of organ donation. This is a free, family event that features vendors, food trucks, music and more.

Motion was made Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adopt Ordinance No. 2020.01 declaring a road closure for the Twilight Festival on April 24, 2020.

Modification of Agreement with G and T Holdings

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to modify the agreement with G and T Holdings until May 10, 2020 and add \$25,000 each month to the principal amount of the debt.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried that once the agreement is drawn up, City Council authorizes the City Manager to sign the agreement.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer reported he has submitted a request to the County Board of Elections for them to consider using Kirkwood Adams Community Center as a One Stop Early Voting site for the upcoming November election. The early voting period designated by the Board of Elections is October 15th through October 31st. The Parks & Recreation Department has blocked that period of time on the facility rental calendar. The Board has expressed their desire to use the Community Center rather than any other City facility as an early voting location.

He said the meeting of the Peanut Belt Rural Planning Organization was held last week in Jackson, where the new Transportation Planning Consultant for the organization, David Morton was introduced. He is a retired NCDOT employee with many years' experience in transportation activities. The NCDOT Division 4 representative gave an update on their projects, to include the remodeled Welcome Center at the I-95 Virginia state line which should be opened in the April-May time frame.

He announced there have recently been several positive business initiatives in the Roanoke Avenue business district, with some new businesses looking at opening there or local businesses moving there. Other developments are not completed yet so their confidentiality does not allow me to comment on them at this point.

City Manager Scherer said Public Works has begun a project to expand the Police Department Evidence Room in the basement of City Hall. It is critical that the evidence mandated for retention by the court system be maintained in a fully accountable system for future use in a trial or released by court actions. The Police Department, as they continue to actively pursue criminal activities, continues to accumulate more items than the current space allows for accountability. The project is being done using on-hand materials whenever possible and as cheaply as possible.

He reported they have experienced two residential house fires in the past two days that were expertly handled by the Fire Department. The cold weather that has set in may have had something to do with the fires. Chief Patrick will comment more on these, but wanted to emphasize to all citizens to exercise caution and keep safety in mind when heating their homes.

Councilman Smith requested City Manager Scherer to make City Council aware of when the Board of Elections hold their meetings so they can attend. City Manager Scherer said he would forward the meeting schedule to them. Councilman Smith suggested other Council members and the public attend the meetings because they

need to get early voting in the city.

Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Etheridge presented the December 2019 Financial report. She reported the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$7,777,219. The percentage of actual money collected of adopted budgeted figures is 45.9%. General Fund year to date expenditures totaled \$8,642,129. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures is 51.0%. After the month of December, 50% of the budget year has been completed. She said during the month of December, the City received the following revenues:

- Ad Valorem Tax Revenue
- Sales & Use Tax Revenue (for October Sales)
- Powell Bill Street Funding (2nd allocation)
- Utility Franchise Tax

She stated unfortunately, the month of December is a high expenditure month, due to the payment of Christmas & Longevity bonuses. Additionally, the City also had numerous regulatory payments for interlocal agreements. However, the month of January typically has higher Ad Valorem Tax collections, as a result of tax payers remitting payments before penalties are assessed.

Finance Director Etheridge announced Mr. Redman has received the required audit report from the Local Government Commission. He will present the audit report to Council at the Board's regular meeting on February 4, 2020. Financial staff are working on employee W-2's, vendor 1099's, and all regulatory reporting for the new calendar year.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Finance Director Etheridge if she felt the City was where they needed to be to meet the budget. She replied yes, at the present time. They always have timely considerations with the receipt of ad valorem tax revenue and they are keeping a close eye on that.

Mayor Doughtie asked if January was generally a good collection month because it reports the end of the year revenue. Finance Director Etheridge replied yes because it represents December collections, but will be in next month's report.

Departmental Reports

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney presented the December report. She reported the department received two applications during the month. They are still advertising

for Police Officer and they have a part-time, daytime Lifeguard position open at the Aquatic Center. She said during the month of December, the City hired three full-time employees and one part-time employee.

Human Resources Manager Kearney stated most of the month, her time was spent planning and preparing for the Service Awards and BARC Christmas Luncheon. On behalf of the employees, she thanked City Council for the Christmas bonuses and budgeting for the door prizes at the luncheon.

Police

Captain Vaught presented the department's December report. He said they attended several events during the month. They had the Christmas Parade, Christmas for Kids, Generosity Feeds and High School exam proctoring.

He reported narcotics seized 11.5 grams of Opiates, K-9 Patrol seized 268.6 grams of marijuana, 14.4 grams of heroin, total calls for service for the month was 2,129, did 78 foot patrols and collected \$3,361.

Captain Vaught highlighted some items from the annual report. The department answered 26,899 calls for service during 2019. Narcotics seized 5,717.30 grams of cocaine, 448.15 grams of opiates, 13.6 grams of meth and 1 weapon. The total monies collected for the year was \$40,799. The P.A.C.E. Team seized \$44,781 for the year, 2,624.30 grams of marijuana, 50.4 grams of cocaine, 1,768.10 grams of opiates, 7.6 grams of meth and 16 weapons.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky presented the December report. She reported during the month of December the department had their ISO inspection. She met with the representative and they should be receiving their report any time now that would reflect the scores based on building code efficiency and enforcement for the community. They are hopeful they will see an improvement in the commercial insurance rating for the community.

She said they were currently working on year end data for 2019. They plan to provide in the upcoming meetings more data showing how the department is progressing. In general they are seeing approximately a 10-20 percent increase each year with fees collected and permits received. There are times they do not see a lot going up from the ground, but still the number of permits increase approximately 20 percent each year.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the report that included a bar chart. Planning & Development Director Lasky replied they plan to prepare a year end document and compare to other years. It got to a point where the graphs really were not saying much so they are looking into a better way to present the data and make it more user friendly.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon was absent. No verbal report was given.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are in the thick of leaf season. They have collected 2,047 cubic yards of leaves as of the end of December. There is a mountain of leaves at the leaf and limb yard. Leaf season is expected to end the end of February. They pick up the leaves in the alleys last because that is where they find trash and other items mixed in the leaves.

He reported they have poured the curb and gutter to mate with the tennis courts that have been rebuilt behind the TJ Davis Recreation Center. This will control the water from running down and ruining the tennis courts.

Public Works Director Chalker said they conducted a light survey last week. The City has two providers for street lights. The street lights burn every night, but if they are not burning the City pays for them either way. It is up to the City to go out at night to see if those lights are working or not. The department found 51 total Dominion lights that were out and 9 for Roanoke Electric (out in Theatre District) for a total of 60 lights out. He announced it was the best they had in some time. They report the lights that are out to these companies and they give them some time to have the lights fixed. If they don't they request a credit on the bill. The City spends approximately \$400,000 a year on street lighting. It is a big expense but it is part of the safety of living in the city.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the department was getting geared up for asphalt patching and if they were even better experts with the process this year. Public Works Director Chalker replied the department is in a much better position as far as patching the streets and that they have a dedicated piece of equipment for that. Also, in the past the City has relied on outside vendors to go make larger patches. The Public Works Department actually does some larger hot asphalt patches themselves as well. As the weather warms up and they get into the spring months, the local asphalt vendor will restart their plant. They take it down every year during the really cold winter months so they can do a tremendous amount of maintenance to it. Back in the 1970s, the City owned its own asphalt plant but not since he had been around

so they rely on outside vendors for that. They only purchase the asphalt from the vendor for up to a certain size patch. If they have to get an asphalt/paving machine out that is when they have to call the vendor to make the repair. The department tries to make every size repair they can mostly because of the City's budget position.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if that was a savings for the City going that route. Public Works Director Chalker replied absolutely. He has some numbers that they can put to this new patch truck that he was almost hesitant to report to the public because they are so good. The amount of savings they have realized just by last year performing 737 patches of their own as opposed to using an outside vendor. He did not have the numbers tonight but he can get them for him pretty quickly.

Fire

Fire Chief Patrick presented the report for the month of December. He stated at the time of getting the report in before the deadline, they were having issues with the software the State uses to pull out their data. He has an updated copy of report he will give to them after the meeting.

He reported the department participated in numerous events such as the Christmas for the Kids and Generosity Feeds. One of their biggest calls was when Wendy's was under construction and they had a fire on the roof. It was hectic because there was so much construction equipment in the parking lot. Public Works helped to divert traffic so they could get the fire extinguished and not cause any further damage.

Fire Chief Patrick announced a representative from the Office of the State Fire Marshal will be here on Thursday at 2 p.m. to make a presentation of the department's new ISO grade which is being reduced from a 4 to a 3. He invited everyone to come out to Station 1.

He reported on the two fires in the city the past two mornings. They were early morning fires so the firefighters including himself were dragging a little. The fire yesterday they believe to be caused by a space heater. He encouraged citizens to not plug space heaters into extension cords but rather straight into the wall and to allow a three-foot perimeter around any space heater. The fire this morning was still under investigation, but it was pointing into the area at the rear of house and porch area. They do not believe that was heater related.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle presented the December report. She stated they have a lot of business activity occurring now in the business district. There are four properties in the 900 and 1000 blocks of Roanoke Avenue that are currently under

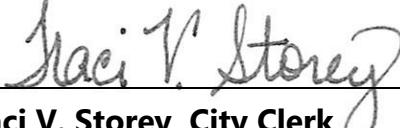
construction, have sold or completing their business use applications through the Planning Department. 1020 Roanoke Avenue sold earlier this month; the new owners are planning to open The Mill Coffee & Eatery in April. 935 Roanoke Avenue that is also a property that moved the end of 2019 and it will be the new home of Dixon Law Firm. 1025 Roanoke Avenue was leased to the *Roanoke Rapids Daily Herald*. She said they were very thankful they were able to retain the local newspaper on Roanoke Avenue. 916 Roanoke Avenue is for sale which is their current location through the end of this month, then they will locate to 1025 Roanoke Avenue. 1023 Roanoke Avenue was leased earlier this month to a dress shop and they are towards the end of their business use permitting now. They are hoping to open in the spring.

She announced they were moving into some spring events that she will speak more to in the coming months. They will be having another Shamrock Supper Stroll scheduled for Friday, March 13, 2020. The 2020 Twilight Festival is scheduled for Friday, April 24, 2020 and they are bringing back Arts on the Avenue which will be Thursday, May 21, 2020. She noted that starting in March through early summer there will be some type of activity on Roanoke Avenue that will be free for the public to attend.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked with the *Daily Herald* moving, will they begin printing the newspaper here again. Main Street Director Caudle replied they will not be printing in house. She said the current location is owned by the old publishers that owned the newspaper previously. The new owners have outsourced a lot of that so they still need a brick and mortar presence but they do not intend on printing in house. They are up fitting 1025 Roanoke Avenue to be an office use for the reporters and other staff. They are currently located at 916 Roanoke Avenue where they have been many years so that property is now for sale and they will be leasing 1025 Roanoke Avenue.

Other Business/Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: February 4, 2020