



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, February 4, 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, Police Captain/Acting Police Chief
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Bobby Martin, Police Chief

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

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members about any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening.

There being no conflicts, motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for February 4, 2020 as presented.

Public Comment (Scheduled)

Elijah Lee

Mr. Lee announced he would be leading his 3rd Annual Child Abuse Awareness March. He invited everyone to come out on March 7, 2020 from 1 – 2 p.m. in Centennial Park and come together as a community to support young people. Unfortunately, there are young people today who face death and that have to go home and have the fear of being beaten by their parents. He believes that as a village and a community, it is our job to be there for these young people. He encouraged everyone to come out on March 7th as they band together to say no to child abuse. And to tell child abuse it has no place in the city of Roanoke Rapids and that we are a community that loves our children and a community that is willing to be there for our young people. Our young people need a village that is willing to raise them up to be a generation that is ready to fight against what it means to come from a low income household or the stereotypes of what it means to come from a small town. He believes that yes they may be from a small town but they still have the voice to speak up for what they believe in. No matter where they come from, every child deserves safety and security. He again encouraged everyone to come out as they celebrate young people having and using their voice. And to take a minute to help and realize that there are many young people who unfortunately will face death and who have to face the reality of being beaten. He says no more to child abuse.

He presented the City of Roanoke Rapids a copy of his Marvel Hero Comic. Mayor Doughtie accepted the copy. He told Elijah that 6th and 7th grade was a very pivotal point in one's life and he had no doubt about the direction he would be going in.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to approve the January 21, 2020 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as drafted.

Public Hearing

Recodification of City of Roanoke Rapids Code of Ordinances

City Manager Scherer stated late in 2018, City staff began working with American Legal Publishing Corporation to update the City's Code of Ordinances

to include all ordinances adopted, repealed or amended since August 28, 2007. Additionally, during the staff's review, with the help and guidance from the City Attorney, changes were made to correct grammatical and typographical errors and to reflect changes made to state and federal laws that created a conflict in the City code.

He reported City Council held a special meeting on September 23, 2019 where they reviewed and approved the proposed revisions. A public hearing has been scheduled for this evening to seek citizen input prior to City Council's consideration of an ordinance adopting and publishing the updated City of Roanoke Rapids Code of Ordinances.

Mayor Doughtie opened the public hearing for citizen input and asked for anyone wishing to speak to come forward.

With no one wishing to speak, Mayor Doughtie closed the public hearing.

New Business

Consideration of Ordinance Adopting the Updated City Code of Ordinances

City Manager Scherer said further to completing the process of re-codifying the City's Code of Ordinances and having entertained citizen input earlier this evening, Ordinance No. 2020.02 has been drafted for Council's review and consideration in order to adopt and publish the updated City Code of Ordinances. He requested City Council consider a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2020.02 ordering the updated City of Roanoke Rapids Code of Ordinances be adopted and published.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to postpone Council taking action on the Code of Ordinances until the February 18, 2020 City Council meeting in order to allow citizens more time to review the new book at City Hall.

Presentation and Acceptance of Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Audit Report

Greg Redman, CPA presented and summarized the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Audit Report for the City of Roanoke Rapids. He highlighted the following items:

Page 2: Summarizes the audit and what they did. It states the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects and in accordance with

all accounting principles. There were no compliance issues that would create a modified opinion.

Page 14: Balance Sheet as of June 30, 2019. General Fund - Cash and cash equivalents is \$3.3M which is about a \$200,000 decrease from prior year. The Accounts Receivable is about \$150,000 more than prior year, so there are some timing issues there. The Unassigned Fund Balance is \$2.8M.

Page 18: Revenues and Expenses for the year. Total revenues were \$15.5M. Total budgeted was \$16.1M, so revenues did not quite meet the budget. Total expenditures were \$16.7M. Total budgeted was \$18.3M, so credit there for not spending what was in the budget to try improve the standing of the City. Net loss was (\$181,612). Although they never like to see a loss, he likes to compare it to the prior year and last year it was a loss of (\$560,000). Property tax revenues did increase, but the City also cut costs in some of the departments and overall expenses.

As mentioned when looking at page 18, obviously when they talk about debt and debt service and interest payments, they not only have the Theatre, but they have other debt as well. \$1.3M was spent on principal and interest payments for the year. The City, without that \$1.3M, had over a million dollars in the budget.

Page 47: Total debt of the City including retirement and health insurance contributions to be paid in future years. Ending balance at June 30, 2019 for total notes payable including all buildings, equipment and fire trucks is \$2.4M. The special revenue bonds are a combination of bonds remaining on the Theatre which is \$14.1M. Next two lines show pension liability for Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) - \$1.3M and for other employees - \$2.4M. That is not money the City will have to pay out; that is already in the bank at the State that is levied from the monthly contributions sent to them. The total OPEB liability of \$7.3M which is not sitting in the bank. That is money over a period of time that actuarially calculates that the City will have to pay for employee's health insurance once they retire.

Page 73: Property Taxes – Total property tax levy is \$7.9M. The total collected was \$7.8M. \$76,000 was uncollected out of the \$7.9M resulting in a 99% collection rate. He said it does not get much better than that. The statewide average is supposed to be 97%, but he does not see 97% in eastern North Carolina. The County and City do a good job collecting taxes.

Pages 74-78: Two more letters concerning compliance with grants and internal controls. If they had any issues, they would be in both of these letters. There are no issues. Both letters are unmodified and they do not see any problem with internal control, the way the departments are being run or the way the grants are being handled.

Page 82: Grants. Major grant this year was the Powell Bill fund of \$439,000 with other small projects such as Aid to Public Libraries, PARTF and Senior Center for a total of \$626,000.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the City received more grant money from one year to the next, wouldn't it show as an increase in the budget. Mr. Redman replied yes the expenditures will increase because they would have to spend the grant money. Mayor Doughtie clarified that it would also show as income. Mr. Redman confirmed that it would. Mayor Doughtie said if the City did not get grant money this year, but get next year, it looks like a \$600,000 increase in the budget.

Mr. Redman stated overall it was an improvement in the net loss for the year and an improvement in reducing expenses. But again, the City would like to see that the General Fund make money, so he recommends to continue cutting costs as much as they can. As discussed last year, revenues are probably not going to increase that much, especially from the State. Although property taxes increased some this year they probably cannot count on that every year. Overall, unmodified opinion and no issues with internal controls.

Mayor Doughtie referred back to page 18 and asked if (\$181,000) was the net loss. Mr. Redman replied that was correct. Mayor Doughtie asked if the \$2.8M on page 14 was \$181,000 less than last year. Mr. Redman said they are not really a correlation exactly. What reduces that number comes in the amounts you restrict for law enforcement and restricted by the State as well as other things. He did not have last years' unrestricted amount, but he does know it is less.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked in summary, how is the City of Roanoke Rapids doing in relation to others he is seeing throughout the area. Mr. Redman replied since the City was showing a loss, they cannot say the City was doing great. But as far as dealing with the cards that had been dealt to the Council and administration, the City is making the \$1M a year debt payment and still operating the city and have \$3M in the bank. The City's fund balance has decreased a little and the LGC will probably write them a letter about that asking what the City's plans are. He thinks the City has done well.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the City was well over the minimum fund balance requirement. Mr. Redman replied they were over the 8%, actually more than double the minimum, although the LGC would like to see 32%.

Mayor Doughtie thanked Mr. Redman for his presentation and thanked Finance Director Etheridge and staff, all the department heads and the City Manager for not wasting money.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried to accept the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Audit Report.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

The Police Department is working on putting on a Citizens Patrol class this spring, more details to follow. We encourage all our residents to consider participating in this program so that communication between the police and citizens can be improved, along with everyone gaining a better appreciation of what's involved in being a law enforcement officer.

The Police Department is starting in-house/in-service training through Halifax Community College. Officers can do it online in order to reduce overtime instead of going to classes on their days off between shifts. The only obvious exception is for firearms training.

We've recently experienced vandalism incidents at Chaloner Park. Acts appear to be occurring between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. The Police Department will increase their nighttime patrols there and additional cameras have been installed in the park area.

Some severe weather is expected in the area Thursday and departments will be ready to handle any problems that arise from the heavy rain or wind.

The tennis courts at TJ Davis and batting cages at Chockoyotte Park projects are moving along. Painting of tennis court lines is delayed due to weather.

The Fire Department completed 105 business inspections in January. The department will try to use the month of January to catch up on inspections from

now on. The fire engines have required some major maintenance repairs recently, affecting the department's maintenance budget lines.

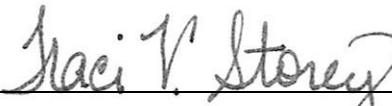
Main Street Roanoke Rapids reports *The Daily Herald* is 99% moved into their new building in the 1000 block of Roanoke Avenue. The PNC Bank branch on Hamilton Street is closing. No job loss is expected, all positions will transfer to Oakland branch. County Economic Development Director Cathy Scott has noted she feels the building would be a good fit for a call center operation.

The Planning Board will be meeting this month to discuss upcoming proposed zoning map and zoning district changes based on actual neighborhood characteristics, as well as an introduction to G.S. 160D changes. The purpose is to give a thorough explanation of all the pending legislative changes so when the Board begins to take action on these items, they will have a better understanding of them. The McDonald's restaurant downtown recently submitted plans for exterior and interior renovations which are currently under review.

Public Works also has had some major maintenance issues with two of their refuse trucks. They are awaiting on a shipment of cold patch material costing \$1,200 to stay on top of potholes throughout the city. Leaf Season is starting to wind down so trucks are now collecting leaves in alleys. Employees have been told to watch for items in the leaves that can tear the trucks up.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt, and unanimously carried to adjourn at 5:45 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: February 18, 2020