



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 5:15 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall and electronically using Zoom software

**Present:** Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor  
Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem \*  
Ernest C. Bobbitt)  
Sandra 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\*  
Jamie Hardy, Captain/Acting Police Chief  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director  
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager \*  
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director \*  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director \*  
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief \*  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director\*

**Absent:** Bobby Martin, Police Chief

*\*Denotes those joining remotely using Zoom.*

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and stated the City of Roanoke Rapids will be keeping measures in place in an ongoing effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These measures include barring physical attendance at City Council meetings by the public, employing social distancing, and implementing remote participation. City Council is conducting an electronic or virtual meeting using Zoom software this evening and will do so until further notice. The City of Roanoke Rapids has a Remote Participation Policy in place which allows City Council members to participate and vote in certain official City Council meetings.

He stated along with himself, two City Council members are present here in the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall. They are Councilwoman Scarbrough and Councilman

Bobbitt. City Manager Scherer, City Clerk Storey, Acting Police Chief Hardy and Main Street Director Caudle are also present. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, Councilwoman Bryant, Councilman Smith and City Attorney Davis are joining the meeting electronically.

He announced the meeting was also being live-streamed on the City Channel, Spectrum Channel 193. The public was invited to join the meeting via Zoom in order to listen and visually see the meeting taking place.

Mayor Doughtie offered an invocation.

### **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. Councilman Smith asked that he be recused from voting on Item 6b) under New Business since he is a life-time member of the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad and believes it would be a conflict of interest for him to vote on the matter. He believed City Council would have to excuse him.

Mayor Doughtie asked Attorney Davis if this was correct. Attorney Davis replied yes and believed it would be proper in this context since he is a member.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda recusing Councilman Smith from voting on Item 6b).

### **Approval of City Council Minutes**

Motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the April 21, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes as written.

### **New Business**

#### **Designation of Voting Delegate for the CityVision Virtual Summit 2020**

City Manager Scherer stated each year a representative from the City attends the annual conference for the NC League of Municipalities. This year the conference has been cancelled in response to the state's Coronavirus response. Instead, they will hold the event virtually on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee will be participating in the

virtual summit. The annual NC League of Municipalities Board of Directors meeting will be held during the virtual summit and a voting delegate needs to be designated by City Council.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to designate Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee as the City's voting delegate for the annual NC League of Municipalities Board of Directors meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated it was bad they could not be in attendance directly but the good part is that everyone can attend now. Everyone can join via Zoom and he liked that his colleagues could be in on the meeting.

**Consideration of Resolution Supporting Referendum for One-cent Property Tax Levy for Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad**

City Manager Scherer said the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad has been a long standing provider of rescue operations in the City of Roanoke Rapids since 1956. Over the years, the City has assisted the Rescue Squad with monetary contributions and other resources. NCGS 160A-209(c)(4) allows the City the option to levy property taxes for ambulance services.

The Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad has requested City Council consider adopting a resolution of support for a ballot proposition for a one-cent property tax levy and referendum in the November 2020 election to help fund vital rescue operations in the City of Roanoke Rapids.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if this matter had to be acted on at this particular time because he was not sure where the City was with its budget. He understood they would be asking the taxpayers, but he was not sure that would cover the need. At this point he was not sure he was ready to do that. He asked if this was needed in a certain time frame or could this wait until the City was a little further in the budget process.

City Manager Scherer replied it was not a time sensitive issue right now and it does not have to be decided tonight if City Council still has concerns and questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said with not knowing the details of what they really need or if we could afford what they really need. He stated he would like to table the matter to a later meeting and that would give City Council time to look at the budget to see if they could afford to do it and determine if that would be something they would want to do. And secondly, to see if that would be enough to sustain what the rescue squad wanted to accomplish.

City Manager Scherer reported that the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad requested the one-cent property tax referendum because they have determined if the City's and County's contributions remain the same, it will not be enough to sustain their operations.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said if that was the case it may be a moot point to even do this. He was not sure what kind of dollars it would actually generate but at best all scenarios may not sustain their operations.

Mayor Doughtie said it was his understanding this was not money that was to come out of the City's budget. The rescue squad is asking the City for permission to be able to put this request on the ballot. The one-cent tax would be assessed on property in the City of Roanoke Rapids.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee replied that if the City gets further along in the City's budget, we may need to put a penny or two on so we may not want add to that. He stated there are some shortfalls out there.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant to table the matter until City Council looks at the budget further. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, Councilman Bobbitt, Councilwoman Bryant and Councilwoman Scarbrough voted in favor of the motion. Councilman Smith was recused from the vote. Motion passed 4-0.

### **City Manager's Report**

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

Governor Cooper's Phase 1 of his plan to re-open the State from the COVID-19 virus begins this Friday. He had a press conference today at 5:00 p.m. to outline his Phase 1 plans. We will have to go back and review what he said to see how that impacts the City. Pending any last minutes changes, generally speaking, the way we have been doing business with our administration will remain the same.

We are looking at expenditure reductions for the rest of this fiscal year in response to anticipated reduced revenue from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yesterday, Governor Cooper signed the 2 bills the NC General Assembly unanimously passed, which was \$1.6 billion pandemic relief package as the State's first response to COVID-19 impacts in our state. A special thank you to Representative Michael Wray who co-chaired the Economic Support Working Group of the House Select

Committee on COVID-19, which was instrumental in pushing forward resources to support economic recovery.

Among other items, the package extends driver's license and tag expiration deadlines, waives interest payments on state income and business taxes that were normally due in April, directs hundreds of millions of dollars on public schools, vaccine and treatment research, coronavirus testing and contact tracing, and replenishes the NC Rapid Recovery Loan Program.

Features of local interest in the relief package include:

- \$125 million to expand the Rapid Recovery Loan Program sponsored by the Golden LEAF Foundation (small business loan assistance).
- \$65 million earmarked for grants to rural hospitals and those in poorer counties around the state, including funding to cover lost revenues from elective procedures.
- \$150 million for counties ineligible to receive direct funding from the federal CARES Act. Each county receives a base funding of \$250,000, with remainder distributed on a per capita basis. Funds can be allocated to municipalities if a necessary expenditure exists and is consistent with federal guidance on COVID-19 relief. Please note that cities do not receive any aid directly but it is allocated by the county. Also note that the bulk of the aid will be allocated on a per capita basis.

Other items of note:

- Car inspections and license renewals are now delayed until August.
- Interest accrued on income tax bills after April 15 is eliminated.

This week is North Carolina's annual Hurricane Preparedness Week. This week the National Weather Service and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety are teaming up to bring their hurricane safety campaign to all of North Carolina's residents. With warmer weather quickly approaching, now is the time to prepare for hurricane season. This week is also Teacher Appreciation Week, a time set aside each year to honor the hard work that educators do every day in the classroom and beyond.

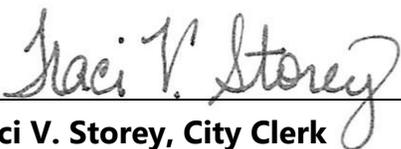
This Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, is National Day of Prayer. The National Day of Prayer is an annual day of observance held on the first Thursday of May, designated by the United States Congress, when people are asked "to turn to God in prayer and meditation." Some local churches have each been assigned an hour on a listen-in conference call that day, where people can call in and listen/pray with church leaders.

## Other Business/Adjournment

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the rescue squad could apply for monies or a small business loan to help them out. City Manager Scherer said he could have that conversation with the squad president tomorrow to see if they would consider that.

Mayor Doughtie stated they are hearing more and more comments about businesses in town wanting to get back open. Nobody wants to get back to some sense of being normal any more than this council does because without businesses we do not have a town. On the other hand, the biggest part of City Council's job is to keep people safe and healthy. We are very blessed to have *Vidant* here to take care of us, but we do not want them to be overwhelmed. In City Manager Scherer's report, he talked about the Governor lifting some of the requirements for businesses before they can open. He believes they are all cautiously looking forward to getting back to a sense of a normal life. He thinks even older people have not seen anything like what we have been experiencing the last six to seven weeks. He hopes when businesses open people will use common sense. It has been shown that social distancing does work. Adding other things to it makes it work better, but not congregating and being too close to each other has had a big impact on saving a lot of lives. He asks those trying to re-open their business to heed the Governor's words, the health department and others that have the knowledge to help us get through this virus, stay alive and to move on to be healthy again.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: May 19, 2020**