



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 **Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 5:15 p.m.** the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

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
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager*
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
Jamie Hardy, Acting Police Chief
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief

Absent: Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
Bobby Martin, Police Chief

**Denotes those joining remotely using Zoom.*

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and offered an invocation.

Council Budget Briefing

City Manager Scherer stated he would be presenting the preliminary fiscal year 2020-2021 budget for their comment and guidance. The draft is just a starting point for constructive discussion on how we can provide our services in an efficient and cost effective manner. He presented the following draft FY 2020-2021 Budget Proposal:

ISSUES

- COVID-19: Major Negative Revenue Impact On Local Economy in FY 20/21
 - Impact on Sales, Other Taxes; Possible Ad Valorem Revenue
 - No One Saw This Coming

- For Budget Planning in Uncertain Times: Hope for the Best, Plan for the Worst
- Departments Directive: Look at excising 20% from budget
- Will need to monitor FY 20/21 Budget More Closely to Track Expenditures Against Actual Revenue Received
 - Unknown How People and Economy Will Respond to Reopening Measures and Potential Virus Outbreak in the Future
 - Will Recommend Budget Adjustments to City Council As Needed, Depending On Revenue/Aid Received & Critical Expenditures

MAJOR FACTORS IN BALANCING BUDGET

Projected Revenue: \$15,125,420

City Manager Scherer reminded City Council that several years ago, the City lost privilege license revenue in the neighborhood of almost \$400,000 that continues to be a hole in the budget that they continue to try to plug.

Unfunded Mandates

- Theatre Debt Service: \$1,256,184
- Installment Debt: \$437,018 (none coming off this FY)
- Carolina Chips Economic Incentive: \$125,000
- Halifax County E-911 Service: \$356,394.
- Halifax-Northampton Regional Airport: \$25,000
- LGERS State Retirement: \$673,881
- Health Insurance: \$1,552,506 (5.3% increase; 2.5% Fed Govt. Admin Fee)
- Consultant Fees: \$88,900
- TOTAL: \$4,514,883 (30% of Budget)

City Manager Scherer highlighted the health insurance was \$80,000 more than last year which equals a 5.3% increase. However, 2.5% of that increase is a federal government administrative fee that everybody gets charged. He was not sure what the fee was for unless possibly to pay for the health care system in general.

Councilman Smith asked City Manager Scherer if the City bid out the health insurance and if so, how many bids did we get.

City Manager Scherer replied they did not bid it out. We stayed with the current local provider through Blue Cross Blue Shield. Last year it was only a 2% increase and this year it was only a 2.5% increase without the federal administrative fee so

staff felt it was an acceptable increase and the employees are satisfied with the service.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the Consultant Fees. City Manager Scherer replied those were the fees the City paid the Bond Council and the financial group that helped the City negotiate and finalize all the documents for the bond adjustments and bond documents.

Councilman Smith asked about the Halifax County E-911 fee. Does it include the one-cent the County gets from the phone bills or is it added to the \$356,000. City Manager Scherer replied this is in addition to the revenue they get from those fees from phones/cell phones.

Councilman Smith stated it probably ended up costing us over \$400,000 with the other revenue coming in. City Manager Scherer said yes easily, if not more.

Councilman Smith asked if he thought it was time to renegotiate with the County to cut some of these rates. City Manager Scherer replied he believed this was an issue that needed to be addressed. He says this because up until this year when the Fire Department responded to first responder calls the City was not charged as a call against our total calls which determines our bill. Beginning this fiscal year they will start charging the City for both police and fire calls when the Fire Department goes out to a first responder call such as an accident or medical emergency. He disagrees with that policy and had a discussion with the Fire Chief to say if that is the case then the only time they need to go out as first responders is if it is a life or death situation or other serious emergency. We do not need to go out to every call they try to dispatch us to.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if he knew how much that would cost or save the City. City Manager Scherer replied he did not have the figures in front of him but they estimate it would be an extra 2,000 calls. It would likely be a significant charge to us. He agrees that the City should revisit that with the County on how they bill.

Mayor Doughtie agreed. He said we should revisit it and have a discussion with the County and the Fire Chief to see if we can get it down some. Councilman Bobbitt also agreed and stated it gets worse every year.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee recalled some time ago the City looked into what it would cost them to do it and asked if they would look into it as a consideration. City

Manager Scherer said they could do that and he recalled at that time in discussion with the State 911 Board that for whatever reason they did not feel they could give up the City's portion of the phone money that everybody pays. They did not know if they could split it between the County and City but he did not know why. If the City wants to do that, he will have to go back to the State 911 Board to make sure that issue is clear and the City receives that revenue. He said with costs continuing the go up, it would be in the best interest of the City to look at trying to fund our own 911 system.

City Manager Scherer continued with his presentation.

Major Factors in Balancing Budget

- No Use of Fund Balance or Tax Increase Recommendation
- Personnel Benefits Retained: Longevity, Holiday Bonus
 - *No COLA/Merit Raises*
- No Full-Time Employee Layoffs
 - *Some Part-Time Staff Reduced*
- Furlough Every Employee 1 Day/Month (For 12 months = \$450,000 savings)
- Hiring Freeze: Unfunded Positions
- No Capital Purchases
- No Grants Requiring a Major Match Amount

Councilman Smith stated he was not in favor of furloughing any employee; he was against that whole-heartedly. It will not affect the department heads or those that make a big salary. If you take 12-15 days out of the paychecks of the people working everyday out in the rain and snow, it would be taking away their livelihood. If he wanted to furlough somebody, furlough some of the department heads that can afford a day furlough not those that don't make a real good salary. We have policemen, firemen and those at public works that make very little money. If we furlough them, we are taking money away from their family and he would not agree to it.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked City Manager Scherer if these were things he was looking at recommending. City Manager Scherer replied this is the way we develop the draft budget so if they are going to change something, they will have to look at another option to make up that revenue.

Mayor Doughtie asked how much the City pays out for part-time salaries for the year. City Manager Scherer replied he did not have that figure. Mayor Doughtie

said he wondered how that would play into the furlough. City Manager Scherer stated they will see as they go through the different departments, they did reduce or eliminate part-time salaries in a lot of the departments.

Councilman Bobbitt said years ago when he was working for the Police Department, instead of having people ride around and not doing anything because it was quiet up until around 10 a.m. they would go from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. They would have extra help late in the evenings and on the weekends, but it would not be any overtime. It worked very well.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked for clarification of the Carolina Chips Economic Incentive. City Manager Scherer said that was project Cathy Scott brought to the City about 3 years ago for the development beside the Westrock Mill. It was an economic development grant for them that the City owes for 2 more years. Councilman Smith said it actually does not cost the City anything because they pay their taxes and the City refunds half the taxes. City Manager Scherer replied that was correct but it comes under the Unfunded Mandates because we are required to pay for a period of time.

- Reduced Interest Earnings Revenue
- Reduced Parks and Recreation Revenue from Facility Rentals (COVID-19)
- Review Impact of Tax & Tag Revenue Delays by General Assembly
- Eliminate All Training and Travel Except for License & Certification Requirements
- No Voluntary Contributions (*RV Rescue Squad, Beautification Committee, Boys & Girls Club and Crime Stoppers*)
- Unknown Amount of Federal or State Aid for COVID-19 Relief

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked City Manager Scherer if he was saying the City was anticipating Federal or State Aid for COVID and just doesn't know how much or have any idea at all. He replied the State Legislature has passed a bill where every county would get \$250,000 to be distributed among the county and all the municipalities. Then there may be additional monies provided on a per capita basis to all the counties. We would anticipate the City would get some relief from the state but at this point it is unknown how much. None will come directly to the cities; it is funneled through the counties.

NEXT STEPS

- Opportunity to Meet Department Heads Individually Regarding Their Budget Proposals

- Based Upon City Council Comments and Guidance, Prepare New Draft for Review and Comment
 - Possible Options
 - Use Fund Balance for Specific/Special Requests
 - Recommend Reallocate Funds Within Budget for Council Directives
 - Budget notebook binders will be prepared this week after receiving Council comments today and distributed to them later this week.
 - Continue to Revise Budget As Needed; Final Draft Ready for June 2, 2020 City Council Meeting / Public Budget Hearing
 - LGC Recommendation for Late Budget Approval: Virus Response/Other Impacts
 - Final Adoption of Budget at June 16, 2020 City Council Meeting

Councilman Smith asked once Council goes over the preliminary budget today, will Council meet again to go over the budget after it is put in their budget notebooks. City Manager Scherer replied it would be on the agenda for the May 19, 2020 City Council meeting for discussion with department heads.

Administration Department

In Finance Director Etheridge's absence, City Manager Scherer reviewed the proposed budget for the Administration Department.

Legislative

Reduced by 8.36% (Cut training and travel)

General Government

Reduced by 32.50% (Benefit reductions which included furloughs, grants, COLA/merit raises, contractor services)

He said it will need to be revised since Councilman Smith recommended the City not do furloughs. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said that had not be agreed upon by everyone at this point. City Manager Scherer replied he understood, but they will have another proposal for their consideration.

Administrative

Reduced by 4.92% (Cut travel and training, reduced expenses in supplies, cut dues and subscriptions)

Main Street

Remains basically the same just incremental benefit increases.

Elections

Nothing changed.

Finance

Reduced by 3.80% (Cut expenses in supplies, cut out a computer purchase and all training and travel)

Information Systems

Basically remains the same (Reduced capital equipment)

Revenue Collections

Reduced collections costs City anticipates paying the County based on having reduced ad valorem tax revenue.

Legal

Remains the same.

Government Buildings

Reduced by 22% (Cut maintenance and repair budget line)

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked City Manager Scherer to clarify cutting the maintenance and repair line item under Government Buildings. He replied they were hoping they would not have as many repairs so they reduced the budget line. If something major breaks, they may have to come back to City Council with a request. To balance the budget, that is one of the budget lines they cut back on.

Councilwoman Bryant expressed concern about the significant reduction. City Manager Scherer stated the reason for spending \$97,000 last year was because the Lloyd Andrews building flooded last year and a lot of the costs to repair it was not covered by insurance. The City appealed to the carrier but it was denied because it was not storm related damage. So as long as we do not have any major expense like that we should be okay.

Councilman Smith said this building was a prime example. If he was not mistaken, the reason this building flooded was because it did not have the proper drain pipes on it and we didn't fix it. City Manager Scherer said that was true about three years ago where we received so much rain the system could not handle it and it overflowed under the roof. This time the wind bent a piece of the roof up and that is where the rain came in. The insurance company said it was not major storm damage and the City should have fixed it better.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Chalker reported the City Manager asked that he cut 20% across the board. Immediately they cut \$934,000 from the Public Works budget as a whole. It was difficult to cut 20% because they made a major cut last year and this is on top of that. They keep saying there is not much left to cut.

They froze three positions. Two were frozen immediately and they will remain frozen until the end of this budget year and going into next year's budget. July 1 they will have a retirement. That position will likely be filled from within the organization. The person that takes that position, their position will be frozen at that point. At the end of the day, they will probably cut out a little more than \$934,000. Since they do not know who would get the position it is hard to predict, but they will cut a solid 20%.

Street Resurfacing (Street Department)

Cut \$313,000 – Back in 2014-2015 that \$300,000 and other large capital amounts were actually in Fund 12 but now they have been pushed into Fund 10. That has inflated the Public Works budget when they started putting larger purchases in the expense budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for clarification.

Public Works Director Chalker said street resurfacing is under the Street Department and it is where they pay a contractor to pave the street. Last year, they did a large amount of Old Farm Road. It actually came out to be \$330,000 so he had to get money out of different places within his budget to cover that. He continued to review the cuts made in the budget.

City Engineering - Cut \$50,000 (Time and Material basis)

All Public Works Employee Uniforms – Cut this line (Will have to turn in uniforms) Will hold line for boots because they are required.

Rock (For alleys) – Cut \$20,000

Road Salt – They do have some on hand

Government Buildings – Department 5000

- Travel & Training – Cut \$750
- Maintenance & Repairs – Cut by \$17,000
- Maintenance & Repairs for Equipment – Such as the elevator, a pump in the basement etc. They cut it in its entirety - \$5,000

City Manager Scherer stated the purpose of tonight's meeting was to highlight the cuts and City Council will receive a detail (line by line) budget by the end of the week based on their comments.

Fund 12

Solid Waste (Two different types of Tipping Fees – One for trash trucks and other is for knuckle boom that picks up junk in the alleys) – Cut \$75,000 in solid waste but could not cut the knuckle boom refuse line.

Councilman Smith asked if the cost for picking up the limbs could be passed on to the citizens. Public Works Director Chalker replied the department was already doing that because it is a little different than the junk. The limbs are taken to the City's limb yard until it is full and they contract with a company to grind the limbs up to produce chips/mulch. They are aggressive with the citizenry that if it is more than a grapple full, they will have to pay them to pick it up.

Councilman Smith asked if the City charges to pick up junk. Public Work Director Chalker said it depends on what it is. If a landlord cleans out a rental house, yes we do. If it is a citizen that puts out refrigerator or dryer then no we do not charge for that. We try to cover it as a service under our solid waste fee.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they are able to dispose of the chips at no cost. Public Works Director Chalker replied they attempt to give the chips away and they haul them to mostly farmers or other places that need to fill a hole where it is allowed by law. Some will compost it. Many farmers like the leaves as well to disk into the soil.

Public Works Director Chalker said they do bring money into the City. Public Works creates \$2.17M in revenue from solid waste fees, cemetery, utility cuts and nuisance abatements.

Councilman Smith asked it that \$2.17M goes into Public Works or the General Fund. Public Works Director Chalker said all monies received goes into the General Fund. It supports the Public Works budget but doesn't go specifically to the Public Works budget. He said the Powell Bill brings in about \$450,000 and Solid Waste Fees are about \$1.5M. We use those solid waste fees for trash pickup, to pick up limbs and leaves, junk etc.

Councilwoman Bryant asked for clarification about the Powell Bill. Public Works Director Chalker replied the Powell Bill covers the street maintenance for the city.

This year it is projected at \$448,000. That is based on 93 street miles and population.

Councilman Smith asked what was the total budget for Public Works. Public Works Director Chalker stated they reduced it \$934,000 from the budget of \$4.6M in FY 2019-2020.

Mayor Doughtie asked what was the percentage cut from the Public Works budget last year. Public Works Director Chalker replied he believed it was between 10-15%. Mayor Doughtie stated the City has continually cut the budget year after year because of the theatre debt. Critical needs such as street resurfacing keeps getting pushed back which makes it difficult.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the department still has a line item for the DuraPatcher. They left \$40,000 in that budget to allow the patch truck to go out and make patches for pot holes. They continue to improve and get better with that process.

Public Works Director Chalker said the department has very dedicated and extremely hard working employees. He was proud of them. They have totally changed the department since he has taken the reins and he does not attribute that to just himself, it is a team effort. They are responsible for every desk phone in every building city-wide. They administer that phone system and it saves the City \$20,000 a year. They are responsible for keeping up with all the cell phones and ordering supplies which is under State contract. We track all the City's assets on master spreadsheets. It is easy for them to do that because they see all the City vehicles and equipment at some point; it is easy for them to track it. The department is cutting more grass than they've ever cut from nuisance abatements to street right-of-ways. Right now they do not have those 8-10 inmates and have not had them for just over two months. The department has been working very hard to attempt to maintain whatever service levels they can.

He said the department was charged with a ton of theatre maintenance in years past for the Roanoke Rapids Theatre. If that building ever comes back to us, we will be right back into that maintenance game again. They have an aging fleet but do have some new vehicles. He was not ashamed of the purchase of new vehicles they have made. He was proud to have replaced some of these aging vehicles. The department does a lot of building maintenance but have hired skilled employees to do that building maintenance. They have a HVAC technician and plumber on staff and both are able to do electrical work but are not too proud to get on the back of

the trash truck if asked to. Those are the kind of team members you need to build a good team and get the job done.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they have an Emergency Response Team that responds alongside other emergency departments. They sometimes go out at night and help with traffic control for both police and fire so they are able to do their job. They are good at traffic control because they have all the cones, barricades and lights.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the increases in Central Garage and Property Maintenance. Public Works Director Chalker said there was a Garage Mechanic position they decided to unfreeze because they needed another mechanic on the floor because they have an aging fleet. When equipment gets some age on it the maintenance becomes more intensive. They hired a skilled mechanic that is ASE Certified who is capable to work on a 2 year old vehicle or a 40 year old vehicle. Under Property Maintenance, it may have shown up this year but actually happened last year. Because of the intensive amount of technical maintenance they do with the plumber and HVAC technician, they split the building maintenance people out into their own line. There is a Building Maintenance Supervisor which was another position they reactivated. There is a Property Maintenance Supervisor, Garage Supervisor, Cemetery Supervisor and a Building Maintenance Supervisor. Those cutting grass are cutting grass and those under building maintenance are doing building maintenance so that is where the increase came from; there were some adjustments. When hiring an ASE Certified mechanic that is not a \$12/hour employee, more like \$15 to \$17 per hour employee depending on what they bring; they have to be competitive.

Councilman Smith stated it was brought to his attention by someone who requested information from the Finance Director that he received a 23% increase over the last 5 years. He asked Public Works Director Chalker to explain to City Council for the increase. Public Works Director Chalker replied there were a lot of things that could affect that. They did unfreeze some positions, they did some minor salary adjustments. One specific example is when one of your garbage truck drivers says they can go to Weldon and work for \$4 more an hour and asks if there is anything you can do. So you do a salary study with Human Resources and see this person in the beginning was hired at the bottom of the salary range and are typically stuck. Sometimes you have to make an on the fly adjustment. He said from 2014-2017/18 there were 12% in COLA increases city-wide. In 2018/19 the City gave a \$1,500 bonus to full-time employees which amounts to \$70,000 increase and last year we got a \$500 one-time bonus for full-time employees. When you have one the largest budgets in the City which covers several departments then

exponentially the budget can increase with a bunch of minor things that can affect it.

Councilman Smith stated that most of the 23% increase came from bonuses and different things the City Council gave all employees not just Public Works. Public Works Director Chalker replied that was part of it. The \$300,000 in street resurfacing in 2013-2014 was in the Capital Budget. After those years, some of those large capital items were pushed over from Fund 12 to Fund 10. Fund 10 is an expense budget so overnight that expense budget swelled up.

Councilman Smith said the reason he asked the question was because it was brought to his attention that most of it was for employees and equipment and not something the City Council gave all employees and some changes made from the government level that sent some expenses down to each department head. Such as telephones that was taken out of general administration and pushed down to each department head to handle.

Public Works Director Chalker said before desk phones and cell phones were covered out of the Administrative budget. He agrees it is a much cleaner accounting method for each department to show their part of those costs, but that move alone pushed a lot of money down in each department's budget. That was done 2-3 years ago.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked by the next meeting on May 19th to give him an employee count over the last 5 years for his department to see if it is in line with the City's population. He understands that he released some positions. Public Works Director Chalker said to be fair about that, he would like to go back to 2007-2008 when most of the employee cuts were made to Public Works. They have never restored to those previous service levels when they had almost 60 employees on the ground every day. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he did not have a problem with him going back further.

Planning & Development Department

Planning & Development Director Lasky said compared to the current FY2019-2020 budget to the proposed budget for FY2020-2021, they have one part-time employee which has been eliminated. That takes \$27,000 out of the budget.

She said the other reduction was to travel and training. Currently they have a \$10,000 budget and that has been cut in half. It is imperative they keep some

monies in that line because of State Certifications for inspectors are required to be maintained through continuing education hours and professional development. As a service that is required to be provided by the City, we need to pay for our employees to maintain those certifications.

Councilman Smith asked how much does that cost. Planning & Development Director Lasky replied they predict it will cost \$5,000 for the upcoming year. They have eliminated some of the conferences and professional development and only doing required training.

Planning & Development Director Lasky said the other cut was in demolition. This past year they had a budget of \$5,000 but have cut that to zero. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if that was reasonable to think they would not have a demolition or just do it now and come back if it is needed later. She replied they currently have 4 homes with demolition ordinances on them but no funds to demolish them. They will continue a proactive effort to try and get property owners to improve their homes without the City initiating any demolition. However, if there comes a scenario where there is imminent danger to life safety of the general public then they will have to come before Council to request funds. If they get to that point, their activities will continue because it is one of those situations that if the Code Enforcement Officer in minimum housing sees a leak in a roof and contacts the owner and the owner makes the repair, you can get ahead of the problem. If the repair does not get made it leads into deterioration of the property and so forth. When damages get beyond to the point of being reasonable to fix it that is when the department has to bring demolition orders to Council. The city does have a significant aging housing stock; a majority of houses are over 50 years old. It costs money to upkeep and maintain homes. The demolition and code enforcement activities will remain in place however, they will not see any improvement or removal of blight unless the owners pay for it themselves.

Councilman Smith asked how much was she cutting the Planning & Development budget. Planning & Development Director Lasky replied with the adjustments to the benefits that were required, the overall cuts total \$14,547. Councilman Smith asked why she was here to cut her budget. He went back and looked at her department's budget since he has been on Council. She has the smallest budget in the City and the department is responsible to make sure that buildings get inspected and that we have businesses in this town. He said they do a good job so why was she up here asking Council to cut her budget. He did not agree with cutting her budget; not \$14,000. He did not think the City Manager should require her cut \$14,000 off the budget nor should Council make her cut \$14,000 off of her budget.

Planning & Development Director Lasky replied \$14,000 was the net change but the overall change is greater than that. They looked at what they could cut to be fair across the board in a tight fiscal year. Right now they are able to maintain all full-time employees. They have worked very hard over the last several years to build the department back to pre-recession levels. We're good right now with the services of people. However some activities of the department such as demolition that are more proactive and most of their services and the fruits of their labor are reduced to a piece of paper after looking over codes and going through mailings and processes and working with people. Generally they are just trying to do their part.

Councilman Smith stated he believed City Council could look over this budget and find \$25,000 so she would not have to cut a penny off of her budget. He did not feel the Planning Department needed to cut anything off their budget. If Council will go back and pull all of the records for the past six years to see how small amount of money that is put into the Planning Department that they put so much dependency to get businesses in this town, make sure it is done correctly and run smoothly which is beginning to happen and now we're talking about cutting the budget. This town needs businesses.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he can agree with that but at the same time most city managers would ask everybody to give something back. It would give a different feel for the other departments that are cutting real heavy while others are not cutting anything; most can cut something. Whether or not Planning & Development Director Lasky can cut something, they do not know that yet. He feels it is fair that she at least look at it and present it. The manager should give that opportunity to all employees. In his opinion, whether or not Council agrees with it or approves it, they should have the opportunity give their portion. Every city is hurting right now due to COVID-19 at no fault of Planning & Development Director Lasky or any other manager or city. He feels every department head should be held to the same tune.

Councilman Smith said the City finally added another employee to the department so they can move swifter. Look at the money they are talking about with her compared to everybody else. If we don't want businesses to come to town because it takes so long to get something done and we can't tear down old buildings because we take that money away. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said \$14,000 may be a lot percentage wise but then they just had a department cutting \$934,000. So if they look at it from a point of fairness, the \$934,000 may be the same hit as the \$14,000. At least every department should be asked to give their part whether Council agrees or approves it.

Mayor Doughtie said it was 2% and most of the cut was from one part-time position that a couple of years ago a person was hired full-time for that part-time position. Planning & Development Director Lasky replied that was correct. He agreed with Councilman Smith on if they could find the money in the budget. He said Planning & Development Director Lasky mentioned leaving nothing in the demolition budget and they are in need of removing blighted properties in town. They definitely need to get some money in the demolition budget. There have been people come before Council with good intentions about bringing a house back to life but they are working and trying to make a living so it doesn't leave much money. It is not fair to the people that live in those blocks and put money into their homes.

City Manager Scherer said they will look into putting money into demolition.

Mayor Doughtie stated in trying to bring people to our town, amenities are important but when they ride through a neighborhood and 60-70% of the properties are vacant that is a real downturn to those looking to come here. We need to try to do something to ease that burden on us.

Planning & Development Director Lasky thanked Council for their consideration. The department was just over 2% in reductions. If 20% was required across the board, she would be talking about eliminating positions so right now they were thankful to maintain staff and keep up with their needs and put their wants to the side in the fiscal year and get a little more creative.

Councilman Bryant stated she appreciated Planning & Development Director Lasky making the effort. It is only fair if everyone is being asked and every department should make that effort to try and come up with something. Council gets to make that final decision but at least all the departments made an effort and gave up something.

Police Department

Acting Police Chief Hardy said the Roanoke Rapids Police Department is aware of the budget crisis we are currently facing. We have made suggestions to the budget reductions for line items that would still allow us to provide the proper services to the citizens of Roanoke Rapids as well as retain the employees we currently have. The items we propose are:

- Three (3) frozen positions
- Do away with one-time bonus they were given last year

- Cut overtime budget by \$60,000
- Do away with training budget (\$4,400)
- Implement online in-service training which they did this past year (Saves \$20,000 from salary line)
- Entertained 5-days (60 hours) of furlough (He has been informed the City Manager would be asking for 12-days so he has rescinded the 60 hours)

Mayor Doughtie asked Acting Chief Hardy what was the reaction from his staff about the furloughs. He replied they have four officers that are currently leaving. One has 17 years in law enforcement; one has put in their resignation to go to Halifax County Sheriff Office; one is looking to go to DMV and another officer is looking to go to the Rocky Mount Police Department.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked what were their reasons for leaving. Acting Police Chief Hardy said two of them were due to possible furloughs. Salaries is the department's largest line item. He spoke to all the officers. The Sheriff's Office is actually giving a raise so that is why one of them is leaving because their starting salary will be higher than ours. He said Terrance Tyler had a back injury and will be concentrating on his ministry.

Councilman Smith said earlier in the meeting they discussed the furloughs and he was against furloughing anybody. He was afraid that was going to happen and it will not just be the Police Department if they start furloughing employees.

Acting Police Chief Hardy said to reach the 20% he had to cut salaries because that is their largest line item.

Mayor Doughtie asked if he thought the two would stay if they were not subjected to the furlough. Acting Police Chief Hardy said he spoke to one of them who lives in Rocky Mount (Hagbourne). The department has a mileage limit that officers are allowed to drive their patrol cars home. They cut that back to try to save some on this year's budget. They met with the KOA campground on Hwy. 48 where they could park their patrol cars there since it was about halfway to help out. Officer Hagbourne was looking to work in Rocky Mount so she would be closer to her child. The other officer is going to the Sheriff's Office because they are getting more money.

Councilman Smith said they were going to have to think about priorities for the City.

Acting Police Chief Hardy said with the new administration that was there now and when he looked through the budget books from previous years, there was a lot of concentration on attracting new officers. He feels they should concentrate more on keeping what we have now and taking care of the ones we have now and then we won't have to worry about the problem of attracting new officers. Whatever the decision is, he believes they need to focus on keeping the ones we have now here. Loyalty has not been something admired in the police department for a long time. He feels that should be a huge priority. They have a lot of officers that have been here through a lot of the bad with the City and they continue to be here.

Mayor Doughtie asked how long had Officer Hagbourne been with the City. He replied two years but she has 10 years' experience in law enforcement. Officer Newsome is one the department sponsored to go to school but said the best move for his family was to go to Sheriff's Department.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Acting Police Chief Hardy what his thought process was in taking care of the officers we have now. He replied he thinks their attention needs to be directed to doing that. There are a lot of ideas and of course the main thing is money. Most of the attention has been focused on getting new people here and paying for people to go to school. He thinks the department needs to focus on keeping the ones they have. With people leaving it is hard to do that because you have the staff there. They are looking at reassigning detectives to the street so they will have enough people to answer the daily calls. If they do that then they will not have detectives there 8 hours a day for people coming in and out. They will have call them to see where they are or if they are on a call so the people will have to wait. They are trying to make those changes so they will not have safety issues with the officers on the street.

Mayor Doughtie asked what was the difference in the City's starting salary for an officer verses the County. Acting Police Chief Hardy said he was not sure what the County's is but the City's is a little over \$36,000. Mayor Doughtie said he had always heard the City's was a little higher. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee added it has been that way for a while.

Councilwoman Bryant asked for Acting Police Chief Hardy to explain his reduction in his training budget and doing more webinars. He said they have a training budget where they send officers to intox, DWIs, radar and specialty certificates they are able to get through other training. They also have in-service training they have to get every year to keep their certification. That training they have been able to go through Halifax Community College and do it online which allowed them to save \$20,000.

Councilman Smith appreciated him bringing to light whether Council needed to look more at priorities rather than things that are not priorities to the City.

Parks & Recreation Department

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said the City Manager set forth guidelines that have been completely met 100% by this budget he has produced here tonight. Those reductions include no full-time layoffs and no facility closures while still meeting all recommendations. His recommendations were to reduce the department budget by 20%, employee furloughs, eliminate all travel and training, continuing hiring freeze, no capital purchases or projects and reduce service levels to the maximum extent. The impact of these reductions are as follows for his department:

- One full-time employee frozen on December 1st
- One permanent part-time employee and 54% of part-time
- One frozen position remains at library
- 20% of overall budget has been reduced
- The Aquatic Center, Library, Canal Museum, Chaloner Rec Center and TJ Davis Rec Center hours of operation may be or will be reduced
- The outdoor pool will be closed for this season
- No summer swim team and possibly RRHS swim team
- No swimming lessons
- All travel and training has been reduced 100%
- Public park restrooms will not be open on a daily basis
- Park shelter reservations will be accepted with no restrooms available
- No TJ Davis Rec Center or Aquatic Center off-hour reservations
- No youth flag football
- No adult athletics
- Limited youth basketball leagues

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated she had received a number of phone calls and emails about the Aquatic Center. She asked how many days a week is the Aquatic Center open. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied it is open on Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:45 a.m. – 2 p.m.; Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 4 – 8 p.m.; Fridays from 6 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if they kept a record of the usage of the Aquatic Center per week. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied yes and he could get

that information for her. He said when he gets those figures, keep in mind one person could swim three times that week because they are counted as a contact.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how many school swim teams use the Aquatic Center. He replied two swim teams: Roanoke Rapids High School (40-60 swimmers) it is the largest if not the second largest athletic program after football at the high school and Halifax Academy (10-12 swimmers) pays \$1,500-\$2,000 per season. They pay annually per lane. City Manager Scherer said he needed to verify that amount.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if there was fee for the public to use the Aquatic Center. He replied yes as follows:

- \$6 non-residents/visit
- \$3 residents/visit
- Pass (based on single, family, non-resident or resident and can be prorated)
He said for a family of 4, it would be roughly \$400+.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if Roanoke Rapids High School paid anything to use the Aquatic Center. He replied no, they have a Joint Use Agreement with them so can reciprocate facilities so not to pass off tax dollars for tax dollars. They use several City facilities and the City may use the Manning track or gyms if the City has a tournament.

Mayor Doughtie stated the Aquatic Center is open 36 hours per week. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said that was correct and is open a lot less since the last time they cut back the hours. Mayor Doughtie said it was a great facility and the City is fortunate to have something like that in such a small town. He thinks they need to do like they did with the tennis courts but on a larger scale. He believes the City should reach out to the healthcare facilities because everyone calling says how important it is and is what their doctor tells them to do. They have arthritis or hip issues – the reasons are all health related. He thinks they are missing an opportunity. He would ask the City Manager to set up a meeting with Vidant and school systems. They should revisit the joint use agreement. It has been in place a long time and maybe the school system would be willing to help out some. Everything is under the microscope for this budget year. He's had a couple of conversations with Mr. Harrell at the hospital and seemed interested in furthering the conversation. If they could get involved with a healthcare facility maybe it could be recommended for their healthcare plan in order to generate more revenue. Although he has cut a lot from the budget there is still \$143,000 in the budget for the Aquatic Center. The Council has received a lot of calls about those using the

Aquatic Center but it is a small percentage of the people in this town. The flag football he is cutting out affects a lot of children and adults. That is what Council has to look at. The \$3 and \$6 gets expensive if you go three times a week but is relatively inexpensive. He asked how many people that use the Aquatic Center do not live in the city.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied half of those who participate in aquacise and senior programs are non-residents. When it comes to lap and open swim that is not as accurate.

Mayor Doughtie said they would like to see more participation in it and generate more revenue.

Councilwoman Bryant said he reported the outdoor pool was going to be closed. She would like to get a report on the usage of the outdoor pool the last few years. She stated there are children inside and outside of the city that this facility is the only one they have access to come learn the lifetime skill of how to swim and have the opportunity for free play.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to get the usage for both pools in addition to the dollar value. He replied in meetings with the City Manager and Finance Director, he knows the revenues were around \$40,000-\$45,000 for the Aquatic Center on an annual basis.

Councilwoman Scarbrough said the emails and phone calls she was getting is saying the rumor is rampant in town that the Aquatic Center was going to close. She told everyone that a decision has not been made, they were just beginning the budget process. She asked if somehow they could get the message out to the public that a decision has not been made at this point and City Council has not considered closing the Aquatic Center at this point. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he could put an announcement out on social media and ask Lance to add it in his article about tonight's meeting.

Councilman Smith asked why he would cut out football; wasn't that an organization that pays its own way. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied the City runs the flag football program. The midget football program is run by another entity like baseball. So midget and tackle football will still take place but the smaller flag football will not. One place he cut was with limiting officials.

Councilman Smith said the Aquatic Center is open 36 hours so that comes to about \$3,500 an hour to keep the pool open. Mayor Doughtie said it may cost more salary

but the chemicals and light bills would be about the same whether somebody was in there or not.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said if you were to open it up there is no more operating costs there except personnel. If you increase or decrease the only thing to be gained in the budget is part-time salaries.

Councilwoman Bryant said based on that, if it came down to eliminating one why not increase the hours of the Aquatic Center if it was going to be operational anyway. Have designated days and times for open swim and swimming lessons. For example, based on the hours he indicated earlier, why couldn't hours on Tuesdays and Thursday be utilized as regular swim time? Maybe one of the summer swim teams could use it during the mornings. Especially if it was definite that the outdoor pool was not going to be operational then those children need an opportunity or a place to go.

Mayor Doughtie asked if it was feasible for them to swim in the indoor pool during the summer time. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied yes.

Mayor Doughtie asked in addition to Councilwoman Bryant's request, could he give Council an update on the condition of that pool. Councilman Smith stated the outdoor pool has a major leak right now. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied it has a few leaks; they are adding more water than they have in the past. It has not gotten to an emergency state yet but they are losing some water through the week. The last time we had this happen was at the Aquatic Center and where you think you have one leak, you may have multiple leaks along that line so you start there and correct and turn the water back on to find you have another leak. It is a very tedious long project. He recalled \$23,000-\$24,000 was spent fixing leaks at the Aquatic Center.

Councilman Smith asked if it was possible to increase the fees for the Aquatic Center. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied that was a possibility. If Council would like to see that, he would like to have a couple of days to see what other municipalities were doing across the state and compare them and then give them the figures.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he would like a full analysis of what the costs would be if they did close it, what the costs would be if they opened the other one up full time.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he had a Zoom meeting last week with two representatives from the National Recreation & Park Association. One from the NC Recreation & Park Association and a NC State professor. There were 100 people on this Zoom meeting and they were giving them direction moving forward with COVID-19. It is his recommendation at this point to not even consider opening the outdoor pool at this time simply because of the money it is going to take to get the outdoor pool open and in place when at best they would be able to open in the middle of July and kids will be going back to school and college the first of August. So lifeguards and employees are not there. Many municipalities across the state of NC will not be opening their pools for budgetary reasons. The bang for the dollar is not there due to opening so late.

Mayor Doughtie asked what was the cost to go to the outdoor pool. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said it is \$1 for resident children and \$2 for non-resident children. Mayor Doughtie asked how many children would he expect on a daily basis, 50-100. He replied yes that was a good number.

Mayor Doughtie asked if Parks & Recreation Director Simeon was anticipating it would be July before the pool could open. He said he was not sure since they were all in unchartered territory. Mayor Doughtie said they did a free swim one day and had 1,000 kids show up. Parks & Recreation Director said they have cut those numbers due to standards by the Red Cross stating they can only have 25 swimmers per lifeguard. Last year they had several days that children had to wait to come in. They also switched some programs around to help such as family swim and teenagers swimming at different times and days. He added the Aquatic Center pool is larger than the outdoor pool. The outdoor pool was one pool at one time but then they made the dive pool years ago.

Mayor Doughtie asked how many lifeguards would the Aquatic Center accommodate. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied 3-4 because you do not have to have a lifeguard in a stand, they can be in an area of the pool. Mayor Doughtie said that would allow 85 kids so that equates to approximately \$100. That does not generate a lot of money if the City charged them \$1 but we would not be losing a lot of money if we let them come for free. We would not be faced with huge costs to get TJ Davis open for 4 weeks.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if he could bring the analysis to the next meeting so they could look at it.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if there were cuts for the Canal Museum. He replied the Canal Museum had a small amount of cuts. They were two part-time positions.

When going through so many budgets for the different facilities, there are some places that are easier to cut and others that are really difficult such as the Senior Center and the library which are based on grants. For instance, the library can't go below 35 hours a week or we lose state aid. They generate a fair amount of money from Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau to offset some of the trail maintenance.

Councilman Smith asked if the City had anything to do with the Canal Trail except for maintaining it. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said the City owns the museum but the trail belongs to the Canal Commission with the agreement the City to take care of the day to day maintenance and any programming that takes place.

Mayor Doughtie asked how much funding does the library get from the State. He replied roughly \$17,000.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked what was in the \$100,000 reduction from the library. He replied the majority of that comes from the previously frozen position plus benefits and retirement that go along with that position.

Councilman Smith said he noticed the Canal Museum was cut very little. How many people visit the museum and how much funds do we get out of that? Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied 3,000-3,500 visits that pay \$1 to come in and school groups also come in.

Councilman Smith asked if some of the Friends of the Museum members could volunteer some time there. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he could ask. Mayor Doughtie stated that has been a topic brought up a number of times. It looks to be a fairly simple task and to their credit, the members of that board and those who participate in the museum seem very passionate about what they want to do. Everybody is having to give here. Staff is about half of the cost.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he followed every recommendation by the City Manager and did find the 20%.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the 56% reduction at Kirkwood Adams Community Center was based on the rental projection. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied that was based on the two large ticket items. When they started on the budget there were two large items: HVAC controls and the fire suppression system. They completed one but did not complete the other but they still log in on this year's budget so removing those helps bring the number down.

Mayor Doughtie said although he did meet the City Manager's request, some of that will take away summer activities for people. He wanted to see if he would change his plan a little bit with saving some dollars by using volunteers at the museum.

Councilwoman Bryant asked how many people work at the museum. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported they have one full-time employee. He manages the museum and maintains the Canal Trail. Ryan Newsome is active and stays busy plus he is a good all-around employee that has good mechanical and outdoor skills. Both Councilman Smith and Councilwoman Bryant agreed. Councilwoman Bryant stated he has done great job in helping to promote it. She understands there is a lot more traffic using the Canal Trail and they are starting at the museum so hopefully more people will be going inside to view the facility and use the restrooms. She believes it is an added benefit as to the educational and cultural enhancements to our area.

Park & Recreation Director Simeon reported that Ryan Newsome and Koy Worrell, the TJ Davis Building Supervisor, went to some training at the state conference and discovered one of the new and popular tools to get out information is podcasts. They started doing podcasts about 6 weeks ago that is on RRspin.com. It is very informative and they do a fantastic job. During COVID-19 those two and Main Street Director Caudle have put a lot of information together to get out to the public. It is another tool the City can use to educate and get information out.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he was looking at reductions in the Jo Story Senior Center (\$19,000), Chaloner (\$23,000) and in parks and asked if that was a frozen position. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied at the Jo Story Senior Center it was a permanent part-time employee they could reduce and put two part-time employees that would save approximately \$10,000 in benefits and retirement. That is part of the transportation grant they get. As for Chaloner, there were some additional items there. There was a significant amount of money in a line item for chemicals, but obviously with the splash pad, they do not use chemicals. There was also a line for pool part-time that is no longer needed there. Last year they had some staff present at the splash pad as it opened to give direction, how to use things and where to go. Ms. Jones, the Chaloner Center Supervisor, will be there and she is full-time.

Councilman Smith asked why line items for the pool were in the budget when there was not pool there. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied no monies were spent out of that line it was just in the actual budget. Councilman Smith stated maybe they need to look at the budget real good this year to see if there is anything added they don't know about.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said usually you use the budget from the previous year so he could see that. He asked about the reduction in the parks. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said they will have an employee retire in December and that position will be frozen so that is the bulk of that reduction.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Patrick said the Fire department's budget is very lean to start with and have very little extra in their budget. To give an idea on how our budget is laid out, operations account for 9% of the entire budget. So everything else would be salaries. Operations include telephone, supplies in the office, maintenance to trucks and buildings, gas, training etc. It was very hard to cut because if they cut everything out of their budget it would be 9%.

He said they did cut some things. One of those would be the part-time Fire Marshal. It was originally a full-time position then they changed it to a part-time to save money years back. This person is a Level III inspector and has been their training person. Right now they have an inspector that is probationary so this person is tasked with educating the inspector and helping him get his qualifications which is about a three year period.

He explained the difference between a building inspector and a fire inspector. Fire inspectors are required to inspect buildings on a periodic basis and it depends on what type of building as to the frequency of the inspections. He said on an average if you take all of the businesses in the city and the number of inspections that are done every year, it comes to about 375 inspections a year. That number does not include business use permits or new projects for plan review. They are working on a fee schedule that may help bring in some revenue. It will not bring in a lot but it will help. The Planning & Development Department charges for their inspections and services but right now, the Fire Department does not charge any fees for what they do. He has discussed this with the City Manager and maybe they will be able to do this in the future. Cutting the part-time Fire Marshal will save \$23,000 per year.

Fire Chief Patrick said they have cut training and certifications completely out. Luckily the guys have been working hard on the training facility on Hinson Street. This facility will allow them to do their training here in house.

He said they cut the maintenance to vehicles line. The average age of their apparatus (fire trucks) is 19.6 years old. Their backup truck which has gone down

numerous times this year along with their first out truck is 29 years old. They had to borrow a truck from Davie Fire Department this year because they would have had two trucks down at the same time. They reduced it to \$18,000 and hopefully they will make it.

Fire Chief Patrick said they do everything they can to bring in other resources and revenue; they constantly apply for grants. Right now they are waiting for the new fire safety house to be built. They received a grant for \$125,000 to get the fire safety house and it only cost the City 5% of that. A couple of years ago they received a grant to replace all their air packs for approximately \$100,000.

He said they were cutting their annual physicals. All the firefighters normally get an annual physical because firefighting is a strenuous job. They have a third party come in every year and do blood work and physicals.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said how much was that saving. Chief Patrick replied \$8,000. Councilwoman Bryant asked if the physicals would be covered through the City's medical insurance. Chief Patrick said that was something they were going to look into because the physical may not be considered a NFPA regulated physical. They may be able to get the guys to go to their doctor and get signed off to meet OSHA standards which is basically what they are trying to do. Anybody responding to a hazardous material spill should have a physical.

Councilwoman Bryant said she would hate for the Fire Department to cut physicals; she did not feel good about that. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee agreed and expressed concern if something were to happen and they didn't have a physical. He asked Chief Patrick to check and see if it would be covered under the City's medical insurance and the City could pay the deductible or something along those lines.

Fire Chief Patrick said they also cut their Learn Not to Burn program which is when they go out to the schools and give the kids materials. They cut that program last year as well.

He said they were on a 5-year replacement of their turnout gear. The reason they do this is so they do not have to replace them all at one time. Coat and pants per firefighter run between \$2,000-\$2,500 a set and that does not include the \$250-\$300 pair of boots, \$200-\$300 helmet, hood or gloves. They have tried to stay on a schedule to replace it. He said some of the cuts they have made, they can get by with them this year, but it is not something they can sustain over the next few years.

Fire Chief Patrick said in looking at the percentage in cuts and the bottom number, some of their costs have been moved from the operations side to the personnel side. The increase in the benefits is for insurance and retirement.

He said earlier City Manager Scherer talked about E-911. He put together some numbers of the responses the department goes to and what may be coming if they do not do something about their responses. Keep in mind, they are here to help. They like going to help people when they are in need, when somebody is hurt or needs assistance, they are all about helping. They also understand the budget situation that is in front of us right now. Taking last year's calls, in the \$356,000, and the Police department's calls are included in this figure, they ran 727 fire calls last year. That is what the City should have been charged for. A total of 2,000 if you include the medical calls they ran. But up until this year, the City was supposedly not charged for EMS calls. Moving forward, he has been told the City will be charged from here on out so that is something he was going to set up a meeting with the Emergency Coordinator so they can discuss this as well as he and the City Manager and/or City Council to discuss which direction to go. He said if the City was going to be charged double, almost triple for their part that is quite a large increase.

Councilman Smith said when the other City Council made an agreement with 911 on first responder calls they said they would do it for 6 months and it would expire; but we kept on doing it. He asked Chief Patrick what responsibility he had for first responder calls. Chief Patrick replied they do not have to run first responder, but the firefighters are here protecting the city. They started doing it to aid because EMS used to be in town and then they moved further out to Hwy 125. When the Fire Department first started doing it, it was to help the squad downtown because at that time they were running into some issues and needed assistance. So the Fire Department would cover it for them to provide assistance. If you are providing first responder for Seventh Street north but not providing it for the rest of the town, the town is not getting equal service. The EMS building is still located where it is so in that general area, you might get a 4-minute response time. The Fire Department tries for anywhere from a 4-5 minute average response time throughout town. That means from the time you make that phone call, somebody is going to be there to help within 4-5 minutes. If they don't do it, then we are saying we can do it down there but not the rest of town.

Councilman Smith said he wasn't saying to do it in one spot or another because the first agreement was the Fire Department would handle this part of town from Seventh Street up. E-911 charges the City a great sum of money, the County is supposed to furnish EMS for the whole county. Not only do we pay \$350,000+ a

year, but we pay our taxes and some of our tax money goes to EMS, they get one-cent from all the cell and house phone bills. Maybe they need to move in with Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad so they can cover from that end and this end. If the City is going to pay that high fee, why is the City running first out responders for the County. He said most of the repair work on the fire trucks came from running those EMS calls. Chief Patrick said they did have a lot of repairs but he could not honestly say it came from that because it is an older fleet. The 1991 truck is 29 years old with 108,000 miles on it. Councilman Smith said if it is sitting in the building and not running it up and down the road, then they are just driving once in a while to keep them running good. Chief Patrick said yes it would help but that is one of the reasons they have started using smaller vehicles. Out of the EMS calls they ran last year, the apparatus only went to about 200 of them. The rest of them it was one of the smaller vehicles. So that is 200 out of 1,300 calls.

Councilman Smith said they need to look at EMS closely and talk with Phil Ricks and County Manager Tony Brown to let them know the fees the City is paying is over \$400,000. The City gets no benefit from the County or EMS except maybe a pair of gloves or something like that to go in a vehicle. Chief Patrick said they provide the fire department with all the materials they use other than AED pads because our AED pads are not compatible with theirs. He did not disagree about the charges the City is getting hit with. Especially now since they are going to charge the City. We need to have a meeting with them. It is his understanding that if a policeman, fireman and EMS goes to a call, all three agencies are going to be charged; the City will be hit twice if that is the case.

Councilman Smith said he understands, he was in rescue for 15 years. Red lights and sirens, especially on that vehicle, people love it and he knows the firemen love it. Chief Patrick said they do and enjoy helping. Honestly if the Fire Department stops running first responder calls he would not be surprised if they would be in the same boat as the Police Department is getting into now. They love to go and help.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Chief Patrick if he could do an analysis on the cost of each call. He replied it costs the City \$5 a call but he cannot figure in the 911 charge because he does not know their formula they use. They charge per call. From his standpoint, when he figures in supplies, fuel and mileage on the vehicles, it comes out to \$6,000. They had some maintenance repairs to trucks but had nothing to do with EMS calls so that is why he cannot say the money coming out of their maintenance budget is caused by EMS. Councilman Smith asked how much did the brakes cost. Chief Patrick said \$1,500 and he included that cost in his report last year. Councilman Smith said he could not believe it only cost \$5

when that truck rolls out for a call. Chief Patrick said that was based on a 3-1/2 mile response round trip. That is not figuring manpower because the manpower is already here. Councilman Smith said that manpower could be doing something else; so that is an expense.

Mayor Doughtie stated we do need to look at the cost on the calls as Councilman Smith said. City Manager Scherer said they would reach out to E-911.

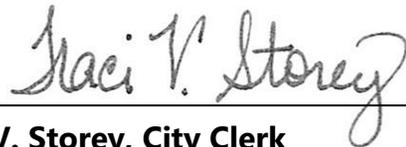
City Manager Scherer thanked City Council for their discussion and input. He reviewed their priorities in order to move forward with budget finalization.

- Find funding for demolition under the Planning & Development Department
- Consider increased salaries and benefits for Police Department especially for personnel that has been with force for a while
- Look at pool usage – best usage for both indoor and outdoor pools
- Funding for Fire Department annual physicals

Mayor Doughtie asked City Manager Scherer to set up a meeting with the hospital. He replied he would reach out to them tomorrow.

City Manager Scherer said City Council would receive their detailed line item budget notebooks later in the week and will discuss it in depth at the City Council meeting next week.

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: June 2, 2020