



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, July 7, 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 \*  
Bobby Martin, Police Chief  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief \*  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

**Absent:** Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

*\*Denotes those joining remotely using Zoom.*

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

## Adoption of Business Agenda

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

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt to adopt the business agenda for July 7, 2020 as presented.

## Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the June 16, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting minutes as drafted.

## New Business

### **Consideration of Resolution Requesting NCDOT Assume Ownership and Maintenance Responsibilities for Phase 3 Premier Blvd. Extension**

Public Works Director Chalker stated the NC Department of Transportation has discovered Phase 3 of Premier Blvd. Extension from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (at Chick-fil-A) leading south to the current terminus (at Dunham's Sports) was never added to the State Highway System.

Therefore, the City is requesting NCDOT assume ownership and maintenance responsibility for the southernmost end of Premier Blvd. Extension from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to its current terminus. He said this would give the NCDOT responsibility from Julian Allsbrook Hwy. where Premier Blvd. starts on that end all the way out to exit 171 with the new road.

Mayor Doughtie asked if that road would go into the City's Powell Bill funds. Public Works Director Chalker replied yes, it goes into the Powell Bill; it was already on the Powell Bill in some format. NCDOT streets get a different formula than City streets.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if the road would go over the stream. He replied yes, they have already paved a portion of the road and it will come out at the Highway Patrol Station. They will realign the intersection to prevent an "S" turn, it will be straight across.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for clarification whether the City was already receiving revenue for that mileage. Public Works Director Chalker replied it was on there but was considered a NCDOT street; it was never transferred to NCDOT properly. It was on the map but NCDOT has been using their funding to maintain although it was the City's street. It was a mistake along the way or in record keeping that it was not transferred. They would not be any change in dollars for Powell Bill.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee; seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adopt Resolution No. 2020.04 requesting NCDOT assume ownership and maintenance responsibility for Phase 3 Premier Blvd. Extension.

**Resolution No. 2020.04**

**RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ASSUME OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SOUTHERNMOST END OF PREMIER BOULEVARD FROM 4<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE TO ITS CURRENT TERMINUS**

**WHEREAS**, NCDOT currently maintains Premier Boulevard in its entirety from U.S.158 to its intersection with 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue; and

**WHEREAS**, NCDOT is currently constructing an extension of Premier Boulevard south to intersect with NC 125 at Exit 171 of Interstate 95; and

**WHEREAS**, NCDOT has inspected and approved this section of Premier Boulevard as built in accordance NCDOT standards and requirements; and

**WHEREAS**, the Agreement provides that upon acceptance of this section of Premier Boulevard, it is to be added to the State Highway System and be owned, maintained and controlled by the NCDOT;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City of Roanoke Rapids does hereby request that the NCDOT assume ownership and maintenance responsibilities for Premier Boulevard from its intersection with 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue southward for 920 feet to its current terminus, effective upon acceptance of the NC Board of Transportation.

**ADOPTED** this 7th day of July, 2020.

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Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

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

**Consideration of Contract Modification with G & T Holdings**

City Attorney Davis referred to the draft Third Modification Agreement with G & T Holdings enclosed in their packets. He said it includes several different conditions. In paragraph 1. Conditions Precedent to this Third Modification, is the paying of the taxes on the Theatre. He stated that has been done and it was before the end of the fiscal year. He said everyone has been affected by shutdowns relative to COVID-19 and the Theatre is one of those. He explained they have sent ideas back and forth and now it has come to a point where he and City Manager Scherer felt it was time to bring it before City Council to review.

Attorney Davis added that in paragraphs 5 and 6, it places an obligation on the Borrower (G & T Holdings) that if they receive any government loans, programs or any

funding relative to COVID-19, the City has an interest in a portion of those funds.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked how did they come up with that amount. Attorney Davis replied they did go back and forth, but he actually calculated the percentage in the contract. Originally there was discussion about just setting a number, but he felt there should be a percentage that is tied to how much they get. That was a product of negotiation.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith; seconded by Councilwoman Bryant to modify the terms of the agreement and promissory note the City currently has with G & T Holdings, according to the enclosed drafted modification agreement titled, "Third Note Modification Agreement" and appoint the Public Works Director to make sure Item No. 7 is completed within a six-month period.

Mayor Doughtie asked Councilman Smith if the six-months was part of the contract.

Attorney Davis said as drafted, the contract requires them to perform those repairs before the end of July 2020, but that could be revised.

Councilman Smith asked if that would change the contract. Attorney Davis replied it would.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if G & T Holdings had agreed to the terms of the contract. Attorney Davis replied yes, they had already agreed to these terms.

Councilman Smith stated he would like to amend his motion:

Motion was made by Councilman Smith; seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried to modify the terms of the agreement and promissory note the City currently has with G & T Holdings, according to the enclosed drafted modification agreement titled, "Third Note Modification Agreement" and appoint the Public Works Director to make sure Item No. 7 is completed as written in the contract.

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

City Manager Scherer highlighted some notes from the Halifax County Board of Elections meeting earlier today.

He said the BOE has agreed to consolidate the following precincts into one based on the concern whether they would have enough poll workers for the upcoming election in November. It will also combine the two poll books into one.

Precincts 3 & 4 in Roanoke Rapids both are currently held in the Lloyd Andrews Building. Precincts 5 & 6 (civic precinct) – currently precinct 5 is held at the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District and precinct 6 is held at Kirkwood Adams Community Center. Both of these precincts will be held at the Kirkwood Adams Community Center.

He said the One-Stop Early Voting plan was discussed. Currently, the BOE is planning on four sites in the county including one in the city. The dates for early voting are October 15-31 which will include a Saturday date – October 31<sup>st</sup>. The State is encouraging counties to open several one-stop voting sites if possible since it is a presidential election and with the virus situation. The BOE is looking at potentially opening two more sites in the county for a total of six.

He reported the BOE did receive a little over \$97,000 from the County CARES Act funding which may help with the additional sites. The final County plan was tabled for now to consider their options. The final plan is due to the State Board of Elections by July 31, 2020. The BOE will have to hold another meeting to officially adopt the One-Stop Early Voting Plan to submit to the State.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if there would be an early voting site in Roanoke Rapids and where. City Manager Scherer replied, yes but the location has not been confirmed yet. They have provided the BOE the information on Kirkwood Adams and they have unofficially agreed that is where the site will be. But until they submit their final plan to the State he cannot say for sure.

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

Across our country, we have seen numerous attacks on law enforcement officers and departments by both violent protestors and politicians. Especially noteworthy have been the chants of “Defund the Police” by protestors and actual police department funding reductions and reallocations by elected officials. Not surprisingly, there has been a corresponding decrease in the same police department officers’ morale and an increase in officer resignations and retirements. While the media highlights these events in major cities, our police department is not immune to the same concerns. If we are not careful, the lack of trust that pervades between these other communities and their police departments could also occur here.

It is our Administration and the Police Department’s intent to maintain and improve our police/community relations through community oriented policing programs and strategies. It is important that our officers become more familiar with the people and neighborhoods they patrol, and that the people come to feel they have a personal

connection with the police department. It is no secret that residents are more likely to report crimes, suspicious activity and generally interact with the police if they feel they have a personal connection with the officers in their neighborhood. At the same time, the officers and the department leadership come to understand the needs of the neighborhoods based on reported data, history, and anecdotal information from the community.

There are other programs and initiatives the Police Department is implementing to improve their effectiveness with the community. All the officers are participating later this month in diversity and conflict de-escalation training with Dr. Stephanie Credle, who is an expert in conflict resolution, unconscious bias, and workplace diversity. They are also emphasizing training on the "8 Pillars of Police Policies" which are meant to help decrease potential police violence in aggressive situations.

Long term, we hope these practices will lead to developing a pipeline of future officers that better reflect the diversity of our neighborhoods. Only improved trust, open communication, and accountability of our police officers by the community will help accomplish this goal. Ultimately, we want our citizens to feel safe in their neighborhoods and prevent the violence and mistrust that other cities have experienced with their law enforcement organizations.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he had a statement in regards to additional proactive things that may be taking place or beginning to take place. Earlier on there was a view of a committee and he did not see that in his report. He did not know if they were still anticipating that because there were some leaders who were questioning whether or not they would have that.

City Manager Scherer replied they were still looking at that. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was any timeframe. He replied no, not at this point.

Mayor Doughtie stated he liked the idea that has come up in conversation and Chief Martin talked about it too: community policing. Officers are on-foot and going into communities where they may not be called to go, but they are going to become more visible. They are there not because something is wrong, they are there to build rapport. People have a tendency to talk to you more when they at least recognize your face even if they do not know your name. He stated he feels very strongly about that.

Councilwoman Scarbrough said a number of years ago, there were two bicycle policemen that would go through neighborhoods and that was very effective at the time with getting to know the community. She was not sure how long it lasted or why it does not go on now.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he knew Fayetteville and some of the other cities are looking at having a review committee. He personally believes that would take some weight off the police department and others. If it is leaders from the community, the people from the community will feel better if an incident comes up. Incidents will come up and if they do, being proactive would help and not be reactive at that point to form something. There are other cities and towns that are already forming a committee and he would really like to see us get strong at trying to do that. It is important to the community whether or not it is important to others. If they are involved ongoing, most of the time they will have a better feel if something did come up to give a view of that incident.

Mayor Doughtie said sometimes the City would look to other communities that have had programs in place for a while and see how it worked with them. It could be about salaries or anything, they try to reach out to other communities to see what they were trying to do or how it was working out for them. Maybe they could get information from some of those towns Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee mentioned.

Councilwoman Bryant stated she applauded the police department for the training they have coming up and was happy to hear about that. As Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee indicated, it is always good to be ahead of situations and be proactive versus reactive. So the conflict resolution and unconscious bias type training is very essential. She was glad to see they were addressing the 8 Pillars of Police Policies. She agrees and would love to see this review committee implemented with citizen input and emphasis put on community policing. She knows it makes a difference when people see someone and develop a personal relationship; they are more open to talk with the officers. She stated you want to see them in positions other than when something is happening.

City Manager Scherer said it is hard to think about it, but Christmas is going to be here before we know it and the police department always does the shopping with the cop program. They find this program is very effective for the children especially to see the police in a different light and interact with them. They want to do more of those types of programs.

Councilman Smith stated he hears what they are saying and thinks the City has one of the better police forces around that he knows of. He rides around this town all the time and he sees the officers out there. He sees them helping people and going into different neighborhoods and if any Council member would like to ride with him and he will show them what he looks at each day. He rides around this town every day. The officers are doing a good job. He has some questions about whether or not they need to have a committee with the police department like they have with the recre-

ation department or the Beautification Committee. These guys get out there and work hard and he knows sometimes somebody is going to make a mistake. They make mistakes sitting up here on Council. He thinks the police department tries to correct any mistake they make and the City Manager tries to correct any mistake they make. He feels at the time setting up any type of committee to involve with the police department is not necessary. That is the way he feels about the way the police department operates in this town.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he was not trying to convey that the police department was not doing a good job because he believes they are. He believes Raleigh was doing a good job, Fayetteville was doing a good job and 90% of all police departments were doing a good job. So it is not a matter of whether they are doing a good job or not, but when looking at what is going on in and around, that's an issue. The issue is sometimes perception and that is where he is with that. He believes the committee could help with that perception. Sometimes when those things arise that could help calm the community, if nothing else.

Councilman Smith said peaceful demonstrations are peaceful demonstrations, but when you get to tearing up buildings, setting buildings on fire and things like that, it is the mayor's fault of the towns they are in. He does not feel our mayor will sit back and let the people destroy our town. These are not demonstrators doing that, these are people coming in from foreign places and tearing up neighborhoods that should not be torn up. They had a perfect demonstration in this town that walked from the bridge up to Centennial Park. Nobody was out of order, everybody carried signs and they chanted. The police department did a good job, it was a nice protest that people can go to. People can protest without tearing up stuff. Our police department does an excellent job by getting out into the community. He know the Police Chief goes over into Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee's community and talks to people if he has a conflict and the officers do it too. He does not think they need a committee sitting back there to second guess everything the officers are doing. It is up to the Mayor if somebody comes in here to try to destroy our town and to not let it happen.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he begged to differ with Councilman Smith saying it is the mayor's fault in those towns where it is happening. Secondly, he did not think the committee would be second guessing because the committee hasn't been formed yet to see what their duties would be so that is an opinion. Again, in his opinion he believes it would be a good thing to have a committee to view things in light of everything that is going on, especially for the black community. If there would be black and white community leaders looking at situations and an answer, whether it was in favor of the police or against, would be received better. He stated do not take this as him saying our police needs someone to do that because that is not the case.

He was saying in light of everything that is going on, the police need a buffer. When our police come back and say this incident was absolutely by the book, but coming from the police department that was a part of it, the people are not going to receive it as if someone else was in that review. He was not saying the committee would review every single thing but they need to help look at some of the policies. He knows they are already doing that and the Police Chief stated they were looking at their policies and adopting the 8 Pillars of Police Policy. If an incident happens, and there have been some incidents that have happened, it will be better received by the community.

Councilwoman Bryant agreed. She stated the committee would be more of a liaison for the community with the police department. She thinks it would definitely be beneficial. If something controversial happens, you have people that are in the community that will be able to calm the community because they will have people there they can trust and hopefully be able to squash anything that has happened in other cities. Hopefully, they will never experience it.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said there were some calls that were made on an incident that did happen recently. The end result was everything was done by the book, but the community had a harder time with that incident in looking at it because it doesn't always look the same when it's in picture.

Councilman Smith stated he thinks it is something the City Council can debate. He said Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee made a comment earlier about the black and white community; they have got to get out of that. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee interjected that he said something about the black community, he did not say anything about the white community. Councilman Smith continued saying somehow as individuals they have got to get out of it. He said he lives his life doing as much for public people of any color. If we can ever get out of this conflict about racism, all of us will be a whole lot better off. He said they have to get out of this situation some way or another.

Councilwoman Bryant stated they would never get out of it unless they confront it head on and talk about it. They cannot just say they want it to disappear and they are doing what they think is best. She agreed and it sounds good, but they have got to talk about it. They have to be proactive and they have to work together to make that happen.

Councilman Smith said instead of that why don't they have a committee to come in to discuss this with the City Council. Have a City Council meeting just for the public to come in to discuss it rather than get involved with the police department.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he had said what he had to say and he thinks it was

well taken and Councilman Smith had his opinion and he was good with his opinion; that's what it's all about. He does not disagree with what he was saying, but he has a stronger opinion that it needs to happen. It is not just based on our community, it is based on other communities that are larger and smaller than them that are taking that part on.

Councilman Bobbitt said he tends to feel what Councilman Smith recommends. In his time in Raleigh going to basic school learning the law on how to handle people; it is a long six-month school. In his 31 years with the City they did not have to get people they did not know and who did not know who they were talking about so how can they judge someone's character on what they are doing and what they are not going to do. He said we can handle that, if he can't handle that, he was man enough to walk away. We can handle it. If we can't handle it, let them go before the judge and let that twelve take care of that problem.

Mayor Doughtie said as Mayor he can say everyone on this board is committed to do everything they can to make our community a better place. He liked what Councilwoman Bryant said about talking about it. They have had one meeting with leaders in the community and it was a good meeting. He did not believe that needed to be the last one they have. They need to continue dialogue about it and need to be out front when trying to say what if and trying different things. On the other hand, they need to let their people do their job. It is his job (referring to Chief Martin) if they do not do their job correctly to take care of it and they need to trust in him. He would like to see them try to get together again in the near future and see if they are making progress on the things Chief Martin is trying to implement and see how they are moving forward. If they need to make some changes, then they can do it before something happens.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked who would that be because they have not formed anything, that was just a group of leaders that came together to say they were concerned about the incident that happened. Without that, who would that be. The leaders that were there are asking now when they were going to have another meeting. He said whatever they were going to do, let's formalize it. Let's not ad hoc it because that is a reactive thing and it has already happened because that is when they said let's look at it. He said they do not want what has happened in other cities. He stated do not take what he was saying as the Police Department was not a good police department because he knows it is. He knows Chief Martin was already doing some good stuff, but until everybody knows it, you haven't done anything.

Mayor Doughtie stated that was his point. They need to let everyone know what is going on in all the departments. They could have issues in departments other than

the police department. That is what they can do in a setting like they had a few weeks ago.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said until they formalize it, you are whistling Dixie.

City Manager Scherer suggested he could sit down with Chief Martin and put an outline together of this group, possibly what its mission statement would be and some issues to consider in the formation of this group then present it to City Council for their review and how to proceed.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Other Business / Closed Session</b></p>
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Mayor Doughtie asked everyone to continue to keep the family of Charles Vaught in their thoughts and prayers for his untimely death last week.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to go into Closed Session to consult with the City Attorney to discuss legal matters on a personnel issue as allowed by G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3).

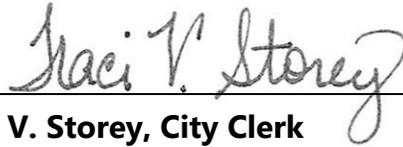
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*Minute Book Pages 19946 - 19957 contain Minutes and General Account of a Closed Session which have been sealed until such time as public inspection of those minutes would not frustrate the purpose of the Closed Session.*

**Open Session / Adjournment**

City Council returned to Open Session. No action was taken.

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: July 21, 2020**