



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 21, 2020 at 5:15 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem
Ernest C. Bobbitt)
Sandra W. Bryant)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Bobby Martin, Police Chief
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director

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

Adoption of Business Agenda

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

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda as presented.

Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to approve the July 7, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Committee Reappointments

Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board/Board of Adjustment

City Clerk Storey stated the term for Sherry Mills on the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board / Board of Adjustment expired June 1, 2020. She contacted Ms. Mills and she is willing to serve another term.

She reported Ms. Mills has served the maximum number of 2 consecutive terms allowed by the City policy. Council has the authority, and has done so in the past, to waive this section of the policy. Council took a ballot vote earlier and Ms. Mills received a unanimous vote to be re-appointed.

Motion was made Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to waive the City policy and reappoint Sherry Mills to the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board/Board of Adjustment.

Mayor Doughtie asked if there was another vacancy on this board. City Clerk Storey replied there were two vacancies and they were for ETJ members. She said they have had trouble finding ETJ members. Council members can contact Planning & Development Director Lasky if they needed clarification on the location they needed to be in.

Mayor Doughtie asked Planning & Development Director Lasky if she would expand on that. She stated municipalities are allowed to go up to one mile outside their city limits, but the City of Roanoke Rapids has a few satellite areas outside the primary growth areas on the western part of the city and on the eastern part.

Mayor Doughtie asked if she would be able to let them know whether or not they were in the ETJ if there was somebody they wanted to reach out to. She replied yes.

Mayor Pro Tem asked for Planning & Development Director Lasky to repeat what she said about the ETJ area. She stated municipalities can extend up to one mile but the City's ETJ is not even. It is located on more of the west side; what they call more of the primary growth areas from Belmont Elementary west to Thelma Road and then out by the Theatre and that area as well as along the north side of American Legion Road. The City's ETJ does not equate to one mile outside the city limits.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

Halifax County has received a second round of Coronavirus Relief Fund support from the State to provide financial assistance with the COVID-19 response expenses. This is from Session Law 2020-80. SL 2020-04 appropriated \$150 million for counties and SL 2020-80 increased that to \$300 million. This funding is being managed by the County Administration.

The County must allocate at least 25% of the total funds for use by municipalities within the county. The use of these funds are subject to the guidance released by the U.S. Treasury, including:

- Must be spent by December 30, 2020
- Must be spent on eligible, COVID related expenses
- Subject to recoupment if spent on ineligible expenses

Total allocation to Halifax County is approximately \$2M, with approximately \$500K to be allocated to municipalities on a per capita basis. The City of Roanoke Rapids is allocated approximately \$342K to use for eligible expenses.

Eligible Expense Areas:

- Medical expenses
- Public health expenses
- Payroll expenses
- Expenses of action to facilitate compliance with COVID-19 related public health measures

Non-Eligible Expenses:

- Revenue replacement

We are also eligible to submit other eligible expenses to FEMA, which to date totals approximately \$7K.

The North Carolina League of Municipalities continues to lobby Federal representatives for revenue assistance for cities and towns. I have contacted Senator Tillis' office as well to ask for his support for this same assistance if there is another round of Federal stimulus funding allocated.

Mayor Doughtie asked out of the four eligible expenses he had listed, would the payroll expenses and expenses of action to facilitate compliance with COVID-19 be more applicable to the City as opposed to medical and public health. City Manager Scherer replied in general, that would be true.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was a line item list for these items or did they use their own judgment. City Manager Scherer replied specific guidance has been provided by the US Treasury and they have had bi-weekly meetings with the County to discuss what are eligible expenses to make sure the City can apply for those before they spend the money. They have provided them guidance on more specific ways that are eligible to use the money for.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee clarified that the City has been allocated \$342K and what would happen if they did not come up with \$342K or already came up to the allocated amount. City Manager Scherer replied he believed they would be able to justify the use of the entire \$342K.

Finance Director's Report

In Finance Director Etheridge's absence, City Manager Scherer presented the Preliminary June 2020 Financial Report. He reported the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$14,701,971. (The percentage of actual money collected of adopted budgeted figures is 85.5%) General Fund year to date expenditures totaled \$15,640,346. (The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures is 90.9%) As a result, Year-To-Date Expenditures exceeded Revenues by (\$938,375). He said last year at this same time expenditures had exceeded revenues by (\$730,817).

He stated the City still has revenues to accrue on behalf of FY 2019-2020 which have not been received for Sales & Use, Ad Valorem, and Motor Vehicle Taxes. They have not received any tax revenues from Halifax County for the month of June due to their software conversion. Other Miscellaneous revenues will be accrued through August 15th. Additionally, Administrative and Financial staff will be working with County liaisons to file and claim eligible reimbursement for expenditures incurred on behalf of COVID-19 services and supplies.

City Manager Scherer said finance staff continues working on year-end close in preparation for the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 annual audit, which is scheduled for August 25-28, 2020.

He pointed out the deficit of expenditures exceeding revenues was due primarily to regulatory and debt service requirements and not operational spending.

Councilman Smith asked if the money coming from the County was going to reduce the deficit they have right now. City Manager Scherer replied yes, they will still have revenues coming in through mid-August.

Councilman Smith asked with those revenues coming in, did they anticipate the City would break even with the budget or would it be under budget. City Manager Scherer replied he believed they would have a deficit but it was unknown at this point to how much given the reduced revenue from the Coronavirus response. They will be able to make up some of that with federal funding.

Councilman Smith asked how they were standing for the department heads to get the funds to operate so far. City Manager Scherer replied they were able to provide minimal operational funding for them to do their service requirements. There has not been any reduction in services as of yet due to funding.

Councilman Smith asked if they were looking at ways to get these departments back to the way they are supposed to be. City Manager Scherer replied yes, he was looking at budget options and realignment opportunities as well as other ways they can save money through selling surplus equipment and property.

Councilman Smith asked if the department heads were going to be able to tell City Council where they are short-falling. City Manager Scherer replied he believed they could.

Departmental Reports

Police

Chief Martin presented the June report and announced on July 30th they would be conducting some conflict and diversity training at the Police Department with Dr. Credle and her organization. It will give officers the opportunity to have some up to date diversity training. He was invited by the Halifax County Sheriff's Office to participate in a Touch A Truck event at Calvary Baptist Church on August 1st from 4 – 7 p.m. This will give the department an opportunity to get back out into the community with their community policing programs. This is a smaller scale version of the event that has been previously held at the Theatre.

He reported in the month of June officers participated in 216 hours of in-service training. A lot of it was done on the officer's own time and they took the initiative to do some online classes because in-person contact has not been taking place at community colleges. Lt. Moseley was able to get them set up virtually which allowed them to do a lot of training through Halifax Community College. It also helped them budget wise by saving a lot on money in overtime. Also for the month of June they answered 2,012 calls for service which is consistent to what they have been seeing. They were able to get out of the vehicles more on foot patrols as part of their community policing programs. They are practicing social distancing and wearing masks were applicable and when they are supposed to.

Chief Martin reported they had an armed robbery yesterday afternoon about 5:00 p.m. which was about the time a tree fell on electrical lines. The officers were able to apprehend the suspect within 6 or 7 minutes of the actual crime. He explained the suspect tried to go change clothes real quick, but you can't change facial appearance and tattoos that are very distinctive. You still cannot have the gun and other items in your possession when you get caught. The officers did an excellent job.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon gave the June report. He stated Girl's Youth Softball and Optimist Club T-ball started their season this past week. They are following the Governor's Order of social distancing and mass gatherings. He will meet with Midget Football tomorrow to discuss a camp or clinic style season. There will be no games, contact or pads involved. It will be more drills, working on plays and individual development. Once this plan is in place he will seek approval from the Halifax County Health Director Bruce Robistow before they start. Right now there is no contact sports as required from the Governor, but that may change by the end of July. If it does they will try to put this plan into place.

He reported they have received some concerns about internet services for the public computers at the Jo Story Senior Center. He contacted Spectrum and they are working through those issues now and should be resolved by the end of the week. The Senior Center has also distributed 75 fans to seniors over the last couple of weeks. He thanked the Lions Club for adding \$500 to that grant to assist them.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the library was very active right now as people are seeking services for public computers and internet services. They are following guidelines and only allowing 10 people in the library at a time. Some people are having to wait outside or in their cars.

He announced the Chaloner Splash Pad was very busy right now. They are averaging about 25 kids each day there. It is open Tuesday – Saturday, 12 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if the Jo Story Senior Center was open now. He replied it was open and they have seniors coming in to take advantage of the public computers, the library and general information. He acknowledged Thomas Goble who is reaching out to seniors who are not there to check on them and making sure their welfare was good. He added there was a fair amount of activity with the fan grant.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to look into adding hours on Sunday afternoons at the Splash Pad. Maybe they could cut back an hour each day to allow for time on Sunday. He saw some cars at Chaloner Park on Sunday

turning around because the splash pad was not open. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied he would take a look at it.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the Canal Museum was open. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied the museum is not open under this Order. There is a lot of activity on the Canal Trail and with the bike program. Ryan Newsome is there sometimes; he has him split between the museum and doing additional maintenance and taking care of the trail.

Councilwoman Scarbrough said she was contacted by someone to whom their son is working on his Eagle badge. He is working on the Canal Trail where that plane went down. She asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to tell City Council about that. He said there was a fighter pilot that went down around 1947-48 and recently they have found the remains of the plane. There is a marker there marking the spot with the pilots name on it. For the young man's Eagle Scout project, he is clearing the area out and making it more accessible. They are also looking at putting some of the pieces of the plane in the museum. He read in the newspaper article that the person the TJ Davis Recreation Center is named after was the police chief at the time and he went and picked up the family from Emporia, Virginia and took them to the site.

Mayor Doughtie said he understood that the Senior Center was open but the museum was not and asked what was the difference. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied it was specifically stated in the Governor's Order that museums could not open.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if the TJ Davis Recreation Center was open at all for any activities right now. He replied yes, they do rent a couple of the rooms out. There is a lot of registration going on and for general information for things to do outside. The track is open but they cannot do anything in the gyms nor the fitness facility right now.

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney reported during the month of June there were no vacancies, but since that time they do have some vacancies. They have filled most of those right now; some of those were in Public Works but as of tomorrow they should have all of those positions filled. They are advertising for a Police Officer and Master Officer. Master Officer is in-house only, they try to promote from within. They have one person in process as far as hiring a new Police Officer.

She called attention to her laptop and said she was broadcasting the City Council meetings live on Spectrum channel 193. She asked everyone to remember the families

of some the employees. They had some retired employees that passed away during the month of June. They were: Bunnie Shotwell who worked at Public Works, he passed away on June 15, 2020; Wes Hamby was a Fire Battalion Chief with the Fire Department, he passed away on June 17, 2020; Charles Vaught who was a Captain with the Police Department passed away on June 26, 2020.

Human Resources Manager Kearney said BARC did not have any employees apply for a scholarship for their child this year so the committee decided since D.I.R.T. needed money, they would donate that \$500 to the D.I.R.T. team because they have always helped them and never charged a penny.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky presented the June report. She said the department has curtailed some of its activities the last few months due to COVID-19 but they are slowly picking back up again, especially with junk vehicle enforcement. They are taking a more proactive approach with folks and trying to be more understanding without putting too much pressure on them. They are asking for compliance, but without threatening too much to cause any stress or undue pressure at this time.

She reported projects that have been permitted but have not been started primarily due to COVID-19 issues: McDonald's on Roanoke Avenue, Waffle House and Dunkin' Donuts. They do intend to continue on with their plans but things have been put on hold temporarily. She said the department is seeing an increase in call volume as far as proposals for home improvements.

Planning & Development Director Lasky reported they do plan to have a Planning Board meeting as soon as they can go into Phase 3 with the state guidance. They have a rezoning request on Hwy. 125 in the ETJ by the EMS station which would coincide with the road widening taking place in that area. They have also done some plan reviews for the gas station by the Highway Patrol Station. They are currently reviewing plans for a mini-storage business near the railroad tracks by ProBuild.

Councilman Smith asked if the State was keeping them from having a Planning Board meeting. She replied they were waiting for Phase 3 to open up larger gathering requirements. They are an eleven (11) member board and some members have expressed wanting to wait until the restrictions have been lifted up some. Right now it is not causing any hardship on the applicants.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker presented the June 2020 report. The department

assessed \$19,700 for lot cutting abatement type activities. For the year it is \$80,673 assessed for those activities. The cemetery collected \$10,277 for the month of June and \$116,608 for the year.

He stated they were working in some of worst heat they have seen in some time. It is tough on the crews so they have adjusted their hours. The office hours remain the same, but the work crews are coming in earlier. They are trying to get an earlier start and getting them out of the heat load in the afternoon which starts about 11 a.m; by 1-2 p.m. it is brutal.

Trash collection continues and they have had to put out a third truck a couple of days in a row in order to put more people on the routes to finish sooner. They are also bringing in grass cutting crews earlier.

Fire

Fire Chief Patrick reported the month of June was very busy for the Fire Department. Usually they do fire hydrant testing in April but with COVID-19 they put it off so they were forced to do them in June. As of today, they have three hydrants left to test at the paper mill which will be done this week. When the mill does their shut down is when the department usually goes in to test those three hydrants.

He said the department conducted a lot of training during the month. They had a fire control class where they were able to use their new fire training facility on Hinson Street to actually do some live burn training. One night was very wet but the guys did a good job staying out there to get some quality training.

Chief Patrick stated they were still holding out from doing their life safety public relations classes with the public right now due to COVID-19. They were hoping to be able to loosen up a little in July but now with the mask order in place by the Governor, they will hold off a little longer. They are concentrating on how they can change the way they offer things. Usually they go to the schools in October but they know what is happening right now. Schools are probably going to limit access in and out of the schools for everybody – if they go back. One of things the department is working on is to shoot a video of the puppet show with the fire prevention message. Then they could provide the video to the schools/classes and hopefully that will give them credit for doing the fire prevention program and teaching the kids the fire prevention message. He said the department was doing a good job at trying to stay ahead of the curve, to see what is coming and what they can do to adjust it.

He reported in June there was a structure fire on Brickell Street. Usually the fire fighters put out the fire and may have to rescue somebody. In this case, they were

able to rescue a couple of cats and dogs. The animals were unconscious and some were not even breathing, but the fire fighters were able to use some masks that were donated by a local veterinarian to revive the animals. He commended the fire fighters for doing a great job.

Mayor Doughtie asked how the pre-incident value figure was calculated on his report. Chief Patrick replied if the department is called out to a fire alarm or a structure fire, they go on the tax map and pull that value off of the tax record and add the figures up for the month. They could be dispatched to a hotel or a residence so that tax value is added in. If there are damages, they provide an estimate. Sometimes that could be on the low side, but they do the best they can to predict the estimate of the damages.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle presented the report for June. She stated all of them are aware that the State's phased reopening plan has slowed. In June, the partnered entities, Main Street Roanoke Rapids non-profit, the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Rewritten Story Foundation, met and decided to start offering funds they had raised through the RRStrong program to the locally owned small businesses. They elected to do so because the need was so great across the community to change the program to a quick action grant for up to \$1,000. They opened the application process on July 2, 2020 and closed it on July 12, 2020. Tonight she was happy to inform them that they are funding nine (9) local businesses in the community, all at \$1,000. She read the names of businesses:

- A Better Chance a Better Community (ABC2)
- Britt's Flower Shop
- Fairwood Lanes
- Halifax County Arts Council
- Aetos
- Rizen Hair Gallery
- Roanoke Valley Dane and Cheer
- Shenanigans
- The V

She summarized the statistical summary of the grant award winners:

- All but one were in the City Limits
- Business Ownership
 - 78% female owned
 - 44% minority owned

- Other Business Details
 - 67% employ 5 or less people
 - 78% provide one-of-a-kind products, services or experiences that contribute to our community's unique character
 - 67% have not received any other financial assistance during COVID-19 crisis
 - 22% are Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce Members
- Use of Grant
 - 78% of grant winners intend to use money to catch up on rent and utilities

She congratulated all of the grant award winners and hopefully if they can continue this project, they can offer another round of this funding in the Fall. Governor Cooper extended Phase 2 last week until August 7, 2020 which is the second extension. All of this is based on health data they are collecting on the COVID-19 crisis and as they watch what is going on in the state, they could see another extension. That would keep them further out and these local businesses really need the help. They did a good thing and she hopes they can continue to do that. They will continue to raise funds. They will probably do another round of virtual events sometime in the Fall and they are also selling RRStrong t-shirts for \$15 each.

Main Street Director Caudle said there is a lot activity at the old Police and Fire Station on Roanoke Avenue. That progress is moving quickly; they are almost completely done with the structural up fit. That ten apartment unit project is on track now to be done by the end of September. She noted there was a tremendous amount of interest from the public to lease that space. She feels that is a great addition to the Avenue.

Mayor Doughtie asked if she could tell them about the old bus station. She replied the old bus station was purchased about 6-7 months ago. The intended business use is a brewery. All of this began pre-COVID crisis so the project itself has slowed. There are no actual building permits or business permits in at this time. She believes the new owners have made it clear as to what they intend to do. There has been some activity; they have done a little demolition work, some cosmetic updates to the front but their bigger plan will require doing a building permit and business permit. She was not sure of their time frame for completion; it has changed a lot since she first met with them, but it would be a really good addition on the Avenue if they can make it happen.

Mayor Doughtie said he would like to compliment them on what they have done to the outside of the building already. It looks a lot better.

Main Street Director Caudle agreed and said they have great plans so that is the kind of projects the City wants to attract and really rehab the physical and economic state of Roanoke Avenue.

<p style="text-align: center;">Other Business/Closed Session</p>

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried go into Closed Session to consult with the City Attorney to discuss a legal matter as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3).

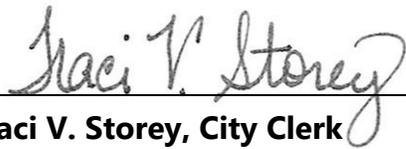
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Minute Book Pages 19971 - 19975 contain Minutes and General Account of a Closed Session which have been sealed until such time as public inspection of those minutes would not frustrate the purpose of the Closed Session.

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 6:35 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: August 4, 2020