



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, December 15, 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
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Jason Patrick, Fire Chief

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and opened with an invocation.

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members if there were any additions, corrections or any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening and stated a Closed Session needed to be added to the agenda to discuss a legal matter with the City Attorney.

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda with the addition of a Closed Session as Item 10 a) to discuss a legal matter with the City Attorney as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(3).

Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to approve the December 1, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting and December 4, 2020 City Council Retreat Minutes as drafted.

Old Business

Consideration of Enterprise Leasing Program

Finance Director Etheridge said after further discussions surrounding possible vehicle leasing program(s) for the City; and additional reviews with local vendors, Council, City Manager, and staff; staff is proposing to lease five (5) Dodge Durangos, and one (1) Chevy Silverado from the Enterprise Fleet program.

She stated the City has the additional funding to complete this initial start-up in FY 20-21. These funds are due to additional City surplus funding revenue received this year; and specific Federal Military police surplus sale revenues. The Federal funding can only be used towards police operations; and there is enough funding going into 3rd and 4th quarters – to meet the financial requirements when the initial vehicles will be available for possession through Enterprise.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee apologized for missing the Council Retreat where they may have talked about these items and got them squared away. He asked if there would be more discussion on the matter so the public would be aware of what they are doing. Finance Director Etheridge replied yes.

Mayor Doughtie asked if it had been decided where the vehicles would actually come from or is that to be determined. Finance Director Etheridge said if they choose to lease through Enterprise, they could consider using some of the local vendors if they so choose. Mayor Doughtie confirmed that the agreement would be between Enterprise and the local vendor, not the City. She replied that was correct.

Finance Director Etheridge read the following recommendations:

Lease five (5) Durango vehicles from Enterprise Fleet Management.

Lease one (1) Fire Department pickup truck (Silverado) from Enterprise Fleet Management.

Enterprise Fleet Management can purchase their vehicles to lease from White Motors or any vendor if they can agree on a purchase price, so this recommendation does not necessarily delete our desire to buy local whenever we can when it is the best use of

our taxpayer funds.

Considering vehicle reliability, the Dodge Durango is more reliable than the Charger. Chief Martin spoke to several departments who have acquired 2019 or 2020 Chargers and most said they regret their choice due to maintenance issues. The Durango is more spacious with more cargo room for all the equipment officers carry with them, along with being designed for comfort for a driver wearing the equipment belt with all its accoutrements (gun, Taser, handcuffs, etc.).

Both programs offer open ended leases, but the Enterprise Fleet Management lease can be terminated earlier if they determine the vehicle's positive equity and/or its rising maintenance costs make it a candidate for early trade in.

Only Enterprise Fleet Management offers ongoing electronic data usage and tracking of mileage and maintenance costs, thereby being better able to determine when it is in our best interest to consider the purchase or new lease options.

Mayor Doughtie stated he appreciated the time and effort the Police Chief, City Manager, Finance Director and other staff made in looking at the options so they can make the best use of taxpayer funds and the opportunity to do business in the community. He stated he believes they have done that.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if they knew if the local vendors would be getting first dibs. Chrissy Huff with Enterprise replied they can use any local vendor as long as they can match the Sheriff's Association contract pricing. A lot of times local vendors cannot do that because it is a loss for the dealership but they can always give them an option. They can tell the dealership what the City's cost should be and if they can match that then they can use them. Or Enterprise can give the City an option that it cost "x" dollars more to use the local vendor and ask how they would like to proceed.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith; seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to rescind the motion made on November 4th, 2020 to allow the City Manager to enter into the Enterprise Fleet Leasing Program for the Police vehicle fleet for the City of Roanoke Rapids on Dodge Chargers.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith; seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to allow the City Manager to enter into Leasing contract with Enterprise Fleet Management to lease five (5) 2021 Dodge Durangos for the Police Department Fleet and one (1) 2021 Chevrolet Silverado for the Fire Department Fleet.

New Business

Consideration of City Ordinance Amendment

City Manager Scherer said in an effort to build City Council's capacity to address major issues more effectively, focus on long-term decisions and to allow City Council and Administration to have more informal and in-depth discussions, he proposed holding a Work Session the first Tuesday of each month in lieu of the Regular City Council Meeting. The work sessions will be open to the public, but a public comment period will not be permitted at this meeting. (*A public comment period is only required at one regular meeting per month*). These sessions will not be broadcast via Zoom or on the City channel.

He stated the work sessions would be held at the J. Reuben Daniel City Hall & Police Station at 1040 Roanoke Avenue. The Regular monthly meeting on the third Tuesday of each month will remain in the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall. In addition, City Council would like to change the meeting time for both the Work Sessions and Regular meetings to 5:30 p.m.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if the public was allowed to attend the meeting then why would the work sessions not be available through Zoom. City Manager Scherer replied they could do that; the technology makes it harder to do in the first floor conference room, but he felt staff could figure out how to make it work.

Councilman Smith confirmed the work session was open to the public. City Manager Scherer replied that was correct.

Councilman Smith asked if any of the discussions brought up at the work session would be brought up at the Regular City Council meeting so the public will know what they are doing. City Manager Scherer replied it will depend on whether or not they need to bring anything up formally to City Council. It depends on the issue and what needs to be brought forward.

Mayor Doughtie stated it was a general consensus City Council would not vote in the work sessions. City Manager Scherer agreed and stated no business would be conducted at the work session. If some special legislation was needed for immediate action, they would plan a special meeting after the work session if needed.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated if they need to do that he felt the public needed to view the meeting like they do now in this pandemic time. City Manager Scherer said that was correct and it would be conducted like a regular meeting.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to adopt Ordinance No. 2020.10 amending Chapter 30, Section 30.16 of the City of Roanoke Rapids Code of Ordinances.

ORDINANCE NO. 2020.10

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 30 "CITY COUNCIL" OF THE ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY CODE.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS, NORTH CAROLINA that:

SECTION 1. Section 30.16 be amended to read as follows:

§ 30.16 TIME AND PLACE.

Work session meetings of the City Council shall be held on the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the J. Reuben Daniel City Hall & Police Station at 1040 Roanoke Avenue.

Regular meetings of the Roanoke Rapids City Council shall be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall at 700 Jackson Street.

SECTION 2. This Ordinance shall become effective January 1, 2021.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

I would like to acknowledge everyone on my staff for all the work they did to make the Christmas Holiday events successful. I believe it was the most well attended Christmas event I have seen in a long time. The local media posted daily pics on social media and comments are positive. Like any plan, there are some things the staff would want to fine-tune for next year. Also, some people who donated funds this year are interested in adding to it for next year.

Governor Cooper's new Executive Order went into effect Friday, December 10th and is in effect until 5:00 p.m. on January 8th, 2021. The major actions include: Retail

businesses close at 10 p.m.; no alcohol sales after 9 p.m.; and a general curfew from 10 p.m. – 5 a.m. Exclusions include: food, health supplies, fuel and medical businesses can be open. Local retail businesses continue to experience hardships while complying with the restrictions to hours and attendance.

Also, today the Senior Center was closed for the rest of this week due to the wife of an employee displaying COVID-19 symptoms. The Center will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized during this period.

The Police Department took part in a meeting with County Health Director Bruce Robistow on Tuesday about a vaccination plan for the county. The vaccine must be refrigerated at extremely low temperatures and the Health Department has acquired a refrigerant system that can hold 56,000 vials. Part of their plan is to have a mobile unit for a drive-thru vaccination, possibly at the Drewery Beale Fire Station. Healthcare workers are the first to receive the vaccination. The plan by the Health Department is to get out the vaccine in January. COVID-19 testing is going on again at Kirkwood Adams December 14th -16th.

Our liability insurance carrier has cut a check for the communications tower repair for \$6,100. A large 150 foot man lift is needed to do the tower repair at the top. It is not scheduled yet, but part of the back parking lot will be closed when lift arrives on site.

I would like to again recognize my staff for their outstanding efforts in employee safety. Our rating for our workers compensation charge was reduced this past week, so we will be paying less for the coverage. This is due to our employees making the extra effort to accomplish their duties in a safe and effective manner.

The Department Heads have their reports to brief you on their specific operations, so this concludes my report.

Councilman Smith asked how the City was enforcing the Governor's Executive Orders. City Manager Scherer replied they are enforcing it by trying to educate and inform people of the requirements and give them a chance to meet the requirements before taking action or issuing any citations. Chief Martin can address it in more detail when he gives his report.

Councilman Smith stated he has some concerns about it for the reason that the big major retail stores are going to be able to stay open and all the small business people are going to have to close. He does not feel it is right to enforce a curfew on the small businesses when they are not going to do it on the large businesses on account of the

Governor's Orders. He stated he does not know what to do about it. The small businesses are the ones who are suffering, not Walmart, Lowes, gas stations or businesses like that. He didn't know if the City could just keep going back to tell them to comply instead of writing tickets. He does not think the small businesses can afford tickets right now.

City Manager Scherer said if they had to issue a citation, they would only do it once and would not continue to go back and cite them on the same violation. Councilman Smith asked if the citation was \$500. City Manager Scherer said he believed it could be up to \$500. Attorney Davis said that was correct; it would not be like a normal traffic citation. It would be more like a criminal summons that would tell them to be in court at a certain time. It would be up to the judge to set the fine.

Councilman Smith asked if it was up to the City's law enforcement to enforce these restrictions or is it the Governor's law enforcement. Attorney Davis replied he believes it would be up to all law enforcement. Councilman Smith asked if they had a requirement on the amount of money they had to fine these small businesses. Attorney Davis said the City would not be the one's doing the fining. The City would cite them and once they go to court, the judge that hears the case will determine what the fine would be, if any. Councilman Smith clarified that it would be a State violation rather than a City violation. Attorney Davis replied yes, there is no City ordinance that would be violated in these types of circumstances.

Councilman Smith stated he understands the power the Governor has, but he does not think the City needs to enforce something on the small business people. If they keep making them close they are going to walk out the door and shut it and then the city will be in bad shape. He has questions about the City's Police Department enforcing small businesses when large businesses such as Food Lion and Walmart can stay open.

City Manager Scherer stated Police Chief Martin could better answer his questions, but the City tries to balance responsibilities toward the health of the community against its economic best interest. That is why they try to educate and inform businesses of what the requirements are and what they need to do.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if it was mainly the alcohol sales that has to be closed at night. City Manager Scherer replied that is one of the major issues. She said she would not think the large stores such Walmart would be able to sell alcohol after 9 p.m. either. City Manager Scherer said the one that has more impact is the small restaurants or businesses with bars in them that obtain a large amount of revenue from alcohol sales.

Police Chief Martin added it is not the actual sale of alcohol, it is the service. So when you are in a restaurant it is the service of alcohol rather than the sale of alcohol. They briefly spoke with ALE officers today because they had received some complaints and concerns. They clarified it is the service at the restaurants not the sale from the businesses.

Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Etheridge presented the November 2020 Financial Report. She reported in the month of November General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$6,963,376. (The percentage of actual money collected of adopted budgeted figures is 44.4%). General Fund year to date expenditures totaled \$6,471,748. (The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures is 41.3%). After the month of November, 41.66% of the budget year has been completed. As a result, Year-To-Date Revenues exceeded Expenditures by \$491,628.

She said November is historically a month that recognizes lower revenue collections. For November, the City's largest revenue source was Sales & Use tax collections, followed by Ad Valorem tax collections. November reported higher expenditure requirements, month-to-date. The second quarterly installment for this year's theatre bond payable was due totaling \$310,961 for both Notes 2017A and 2017B.

Finance Director Etheridge stated overall, the City's revenues are favorable at five months year-to-date; and expenditures are holding consistent to budget at the present time.

Mayor Doughtie confirmed the \$310,961 is the total for the two notes the City pays four times a year. She replied that was correct. He said that was a little over \$1.2M and previously they were at \$2M with the old financing. She said yes, with the fees.

Councilman Smith asked Finance Director Etheridge when they would be expecting any more money from the County for Ad Valorem Taxes. She replied typically in January the City receives a substantial amount for December collections. Many pay before the December 31st due date.

Councilman Smith asked if they were still holding strong on sales tax. She stated they were consistent with prior year. She was not seeing any great gains, but at least they were not losing any sales and use tax at the present time. He asked when she expected the next sales tax revenue. She replied before the end of this week. He asked if she knew how much it would be. She said not yet.

Councilman Smith stated they had anticipated the sales tax would be down about 20%. She replied there was discussion based on NCLM guidance on what they did not know with how COVID-19 was going to impact municipal budgets. At the present time she has not seen the City's sales and use tax decrease.

Councilman Smith stated they required all the department heads to reduce their budgets quite strong because they anticipated so much loss in sales tax. Since they are not having the loss they anticipated, he asked if the department heads were going to be able to come back with some of their budget. Finance Director Etheridge replied at this time she thinks they need to be very mindful that COVID-19 is not over and they may begin to see these down trend turns in revenue. They already see they came in under budget with Powell Bill and with the Utility Franchise taxes. They are monitoring it very closely.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for her best expertise opinion on where they are. Finance Director Etheridge replied right now they are holding revenue and expenditure to budget year-to-date as of November. She added that December is also a very high expenditure month. For these reasons, they need to be careful. They have some months with higher expenditure requirements on lower revenue months.

Councilman Smith said they discussed the revenue shortfalls in the Council Retreat and it was not coming from property tax or sales tax. Maybe Council needs to look at some of the budget items. He knows they are down employees and they have some employees at Public Works that need to be boosted up. He thinks they need to look at some of these things. Finance Director Etheridge said they could look at it when they begin their budget discussions.

Mayor Doughtie asked where they were on fund balance right now. She replied presently it is 16%. He asked what their goal was. She said 25%. Mayor Doughtie said that was something they needed to be mindful of. Councilman Smith stated they keep going into the fund balance and they need to stop going into it.

Departmental Reports

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney reported the current vacancies are for Police Officers, a part-time Lifeguard, two (2) part-time Public Works positions, Property Maintenance and part-time Finance/Tax Technician. They received five applications in the month of November and hired one Sanitation Equipment Operator and two part-time Public Works Workers.

She announced they had one employee who retired on December 1, 2020.

Councilman Smith questioned the Finance/Tax Technician position. He thought the County collected the taxes for the City. She replied they do but there are other things that person does. This position would help with payroll as a back-up. That person will work 25 hours per week at 5 hours per day, 5 days a week. They also work at the front desk in the tax department, collect money for the Planning Department and any other City items that are billed.

Councilman Smith asked if they were paying close attention to the time the part-time employees were working. Because if they work a certain number of hours, the City will have to pay benefits for them. Human Resources Manager Kearney said yes, the payroll person keeps a close eye on that and if someone is due benefits that they start receiving benefits. She added if they reach 1,000 hours in a year, the City is required to start paying retirement for them.

Mayor Doughtie asked if that position was one they already had. She replied it was a full-time position and the person transferred to the Parks & Recreation Department. This position went from full-time to part-time. They reduced the hours and did away with the benefits.

Councilman Smith asked if she could tell them how many employees they were short in each department. She believed they were down 7 Police Officers, 2 Public Works positions (PT), Street Maintenance position, Property Maintenance position, Equipment Mechanic and Crew Leader. Recreation has 3 positions open. This does not include some of the frozen positions.

Councilman Smith asked how many frozen positions were there. Human Resources Manager Kearney said she could prepare a report and send to City Council because she does not know all of them off the top of her head. City Council agreed that would be nice. Mayor Doughtie stated the numbers would not reflect the inmates they do not have as well.

Police

Chief Martin presented the November 2020 report. He announced they held a successful Christmas for Kids project this past Saturday. The Police Department and Police Club were able to serve 41 kids this year. They had to modify the event; they did not have the children onsite with them. They received lists from the parents/families and went beyond their requests and were able to spend \$200 per child. Once they shopped for the items they delivered the toys to the families. The

outpouring and tears of joy that was reported made it all worthwhile. They are very appreciative of all the volunteers and donations that were received.

He announced one of their cadets recently graduated Basic Law Enforcement, Curtis Majette. He successfully passed the State exam as well and is one of their new hires. He will now start the 12-week basic training through the Police Department. They do have another young man they are potentially looking at starting BLET in January.

Chief Martin called their attention to the Narcotics Investigation section on the November report. They have been working hard with federal agencies. They had a seizure of \$110,341 which netted 6,000 grams of marijuana. In conjunction with their federal agency, the agents at the Police Department have been doing a phenomenal job with the narcotics within the city limits. He also commended all the officers that have been working over the past months during the pandemic. They have gone through some rough times trying to stay healthy and treating the citizens fair in order to give them a sense of security. He also thanked the Mayor, City Council, the City Manager and other department heads for being able to sit down and discuss things so they can make the city better for the citizens.

Mayor Doughtie thanked Chief Martin and the officers for keeping them safe. They have a very difficult job. By getting regulations from the top down and there being other law enforcement that say they are not going to enforce laws, makes it really hard on what they can close up, fine and what they can shut down while others stay open. It's a grey area so it is difficult to know how much to push it. He agrees with Councilman Smith that if they lose their businesses, they will lose the town. They need to try to continue doing what they can to keep the people safe from the virus and other things, but also try to keep the businesses open.

Chief Martin stated he has been working closely with the City Manager monitoring these executive orders. He assured the Mayor, City Council and citizens that they have the businesses' best interests in mind. Each of the officers have been instructed in regards to the executive orders. Their first goal is to educate the citizens and business owners. They want them to understand exactly what is going on and make sure they do not have any issues. His goal is to not have any citations issued. As they go out to address complaints, they talk with the businesses. He assured them the officers were well versed on this and are keeping up with it. The businesses are always on their minds especially during the hard times they've come through. They are going to do what is right at the end of the day.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he was very proud of his staff and Main

Street Director Caudle on Centennial Park and the Christmas event. The hard work they put into it has really paid off. It is nice to ride by and see families taking portraits out there and being in the park at all times of the day. He believes it is good for the city of Roanoke Rapids to have that opportunity to get out and enjoy the holidays.

He announced they are doing free COVID testing at Kirkwood Adams now. There were 99 people that took advantage of the free testing last month over the 3-day period.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said the Army Corps of Engineers visited two locations on the Canal Trail. They stated the City would not need permits to replace two wooden bridges. They will replace the bridges with pipe, riprap and back fill. They are waiting on the official letter before moving forward. They will be doing the project in-house and with funding for the materials by the Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The reason for replacing the bridges is to make it a safer transition through these areas as well as easier for maintenance. He added if there was an emergency on the trail, it will make the transition in the area for police, EMS or fire much safer.

He reported they've had some issues with the clock at Centennial Park. It is not keeping time accurately. They are addressing the issue and getting in touch with the company it was purchased from back in 2000. They hope to have that issue solved in the next few days.

Councilman Smith expressed his appreciation to Parks & Recreation Director Simeon and Main Street Director Caudle on the JOY in the Park event. He thought since they could not have the parade, it was very nice. It was a good thing that people donated to the event as well. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said there are people that want to donate to make it even better next year.

Councilwoman Bryant also thanked them for a job well done.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated the inspections department continues to be busy with November inspection numbers higher than most of the monthly averages. The number of inspections have been higher than expected this year.

She stated yesterday she started advertising a request for proposals for a Grant Administrator for the CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The due date for those proposals which would be a lump sum fee not to exceed, will be January 12, 2021. Once she receives the proposals, she and staff will review them, rank them and present them to City Council at the January 19th meeting to award the contract. This

will enable them to move forward with the due diligence required to get the release of funds for that housing grant. They have also notified approximately twenty-five consulting firms across the state. They are also advertising with the State Department of Administration under the historically underutilized businesses and the IPS purchasing as well. There will be an ad in the *News & Observer* and the *Daily Herald*. All these expenses are required to create a competitive application cycle.

Planning & Development Director Lasky reported she finished up the round of meetings with the Upper Coastal Plain COG for the COVID-19 response with the Community Economic Development Strategies. The next 5-year update for that will begin next year so they are seeing where they stand in the five-county region.

She said she had several meetings for the Hazard Mitigation Plan update that is required every five years. Staff has participated in completing a community capability assessment survey. The draft plan should be developed by the Spring. Very soon there will be a public survey that will be sent out. That information will be distributed throughout the media to try and get as many responses as possible.

She stated with the changes required under NCGS 160D for the Land Use Ordinance, Staff Planner, Joe Hatch has tirelessly worked on the code revisions since March. She proposed a joint meeting between the City Council and Planning Board in January or February to review the changes to the ordinance in one meeting. Then have an open public viewing period for 30-45 days prior to public hearings. Adoption would have to take place prior to July 1, 2021. Changes are coming from the State Legislature from a couple of years ago.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker presented the November report. He stated leaf collection continues and the department is very busy with that. The three main items the department is doing every day is leaf collection, cemetery and sanitation/refuse. They went through a period where they were behind in those departments but they have now recovered from that and are getting back on track.

He said the recycling convenience center at the Aquatic Center has been temporarily closed. There is no container there because of people putting things in the container that do not belong. It continues to cause issues. They have removed it for a few days and hopefully it will give the public a chance to get into compliance. They still have a container at Public Works. They hope to get the container back out to the Aquatic Center next week for the Christmas rush. If they continue to have issues, they will have to take these containers out of service for a longer period of time because they will not accept the recycle stream with the wrong materials in the containers. They

will try to better educate the public; maybe do better signage.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the containers could be placed somewhere to have some kind of surveillance on them. Public Works Director Chalker replied they actually do have surveillance but a lot of the camera systems at different facilities only have so much storage capacity. They would have to look at the last time the container was pulled by the vendor so a lot of times you don't know where to look. They do not have enough staff to attend to that or to look at two hours of camera footage, so it's easier said than done.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how many containers does the City have and where were they located. He replied they have two. One is at the Aquatic Center and the other is at the Public Works facility. She asked if they had the same problem with the one at the Public Works container. He replied yes, they have. The latest, very serious problem was at the Aquatic Center. There were things all around the container (approximately 15 pallets and stretch film). His goal is to get them back in place before Christmas because they show heavy activity with gift wrap and boxes. They have to clean used motor oil out of one of them before they can put it back into service.

Councilman Smith said he was at the cemetery the other day and wanted Public Works Director Chalker to thank his staff that work at the cemetery. They have done an excellent job out there; it looks nice, clean and everything was in order. Public Works Director Chalker appreciated the compliment and stated the cemetery has grown a lot since he came onboard with the City in 2009 and it will continue to grow. For many years it has only been two employees there, but they are almost overwhelmed at this point. They had four openings and closings today. They are either prepping the grave site or closing a grave site. That is a lot going on for two people to keep up with that along with the other things to keep the cemetery looking nice.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle thanked City Council for the kind words tonight and for many of them being there at the holiday events that weekend. She explained why Main Street is interested in bringing people into the district through the holidays. One of their core goals is to build out the historic district as a place for family gatherings and recreational activities. That was what it was in the past and what people remember it as. There is an easy way to do that – put feet on the street. 2020 has not made that very easy at all. In fact, most of their work plan of ways they could bring feet on the street were not possible because of COVID-19. This was a good opportunity for the Main Street Board to bring people into the district in a safe, but fun and recreational way. The Main Street *Facebook* page is one of many *Facebook* pages she manages. On Saturday she had a message from a citizen that said in 1026 the Santa

mailbox is really cool and knew the cutoff was December 6th but said Santa has a lot of mail. She went by the space to check the mailbox although she had emptied it on Friday afternoon. When she pulled into the parking lot, there were so many people in the space she had to wait over 30 minutes to get in. There were several different families taking pictures and a Santa Claus was also there. There were people in every section of the space that would create a good photo opportunity. Everyone was laughing and having a great time. So that puts feet on the street which is what that space and everything they did between there and Centennial Park was meant to do from a Main Street perspective. The small businesses are very appreciative that they tried to do some out-of-the-box activities. Their sales are okay but they are still thankful that Main Street and the City provided an opportunity to bring people to them in an otherwise very difficult year. She thanked all the private donors who helped build out some of these cool photo opportunities.

She reported the Main Street holiday events are not over. They still have the Elfie Selfie promotion that is going through December 19th. They've already had two winners so they have given away \$200. They will draw one or two more this week. It has been a lot of fun and had a lot of cool pictures. If they would like to see the pictures, go on *Facebook* or *Instagram* and search #rrelfieselfie. If they would like to see any of the pictures of Centennial Park or the 1026 space with #roanokerapidsjoy or go to the visit Halifax page or Main Street *Facebook* page.

Main Street Director Caudle stated in reference to the discussions tonight about the City's small businesses and the impacts they are experiencing from executive orders, as a Small Business Champion she wanted to echo their concerns. The small businesses are tired. It is not their job, it is livelihood and it is their life. They are experiencing a lot of frustration as business owners. She thinks something people forget is for the small business owners, the health and safety of the community is their number one concern as well. They have taken every precaution and then some to make sure the public's shopping or dining experience is a safe one. The best thing the public can do outside of educating them, is for people to patronize the small, locally owned businesses. This isn't a job or a paycheck for them, it is their livelihood. Right now is a critical point for many. They do not see any additional federal or state assistance coming to them any time soon and they really need it. The best thing the public can do is go buy a gift certificate or dine in their restaurant.

<p>Other Business/Closed Session</p>

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

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked to make an announcement before they went into closed session. This Saturday at Cedarwood Cemetery, the Boy Scouts were sponsoring Wreaths Across America. She believed it started at 11 a.m. and would be the first time this has occurred at the cemetery.

[Remainder of page intentionally left blank]

Minute Book Pages 20165 - 20170 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 Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: 1/19/2021