



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, April 13 at 3:00 p.m.** the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Ernest C. Bobbitt)
Sandra Bryant
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

Absent: Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

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

Council Budget Briefing

City Manager Scherer stated they were here to discuss the first draft of the department budgets for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. These budgets are their first pass at determining what the City can fiscally afford and what is needed to effectively accomplish the departments' jobs. The overall mission for next year's budget is provide the citizens with a safe and livable community. This is done through providing effective and cost efficient services to provide for an acceptable quality of life for the citizens. The priorities to support this mission for budget purposes are as follows:

- a) Address personnel and benefits that have not been acted on in recent budgets.
- b) Address important capital needs.
- c) Maintain and resource adequate public safety forces (mainly police and fire).
- d) Try to keep all facilities open.

He said the goal for these meetings is for City Council to review their recommended allotment of revenue funds that are cost effective and yield the greatest benefit with available resources. If that is not deemed possible, they will adjust budget levels consequently and in accordance to their guidance to achieve a balanced budget. Department projections, in many cases, are either trying to return to pre-COVID funding and manning levels or requesting capital items that are overdue for replacement or acquisition.

City Manager Scherer reported their initial revenue estimates total approximately \$16M. Finance Director Etheridge is reviewing the NCLM revenue forecast to see if her estimates need to be revised. Based upon initial guidance, they anticipate being able to use the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to offset a portion of personnel expenses in the Police, Fire and Public Works departments. They propose to use these savings to help fund personnel benefits and capital needs.

He announced they will be begin today with Public Works Director Chalker with his Public Works department's budgets.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Chalker presented his proposed FY 2021-2022 budget. (Copy of presentation on file in Clerk's Office). He stated the goal of this year's budget is to restore the budget to previous levels and stabilize and restore their workforce. He reported the FY2020-2021 approved budget for the Public Works Department was \$3,933,493. The FY2021-2022 requested budget is \$4,842,398 which is a difference of \$908,905 that is needed to perform daily operations and begin to restore the budget to previous levels.

He summarized the notable increases:

- Restore Street Resurfacing Program - \$400,000 increase
- Street Lights - \$30,000 increase
- Fuel - 20% Market Increase
- Contracted Services - \$18,500 increase
- Refuse Chipping Fee - \$15,000 due to increased volume due to COVID
- Landfill Tipping Fee – 10% market increase
- Safety (Program) - \$3,400 increase

Public Works Director reviewed the proposed increases and additions in Public Works fees to allow them to better recover for some of their services they provide to citizens and other departments.

Councilman Smith arrived to meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Business Solid Waste User Fee & Disposal Fee

Roll Out Container Monthly fees \$25 per container per month (\$5 increase).

Residential Solid Waste User Fee

\$240 per Residential Unit per year (Increase of \$20).

Illegally Dumped Items (New Fee/Fine)

When people come into the city and illegally dump items in alley ways. Public Works Director Chalker stated people are doing this almost every day. Contractors with truckloads of building materials, furniture, tires etc. drive behind vacant houses and dump it out. It is a tremendous cost for the department. If the department gets the police involved and finds out who did it, they did not have any way to assign a cost to them. This is what this new item in the fee schedule was for.

Lot Cutting Fees

Remained the same.

Emergency Response/Third Party Labor Rate Charge (New)

\$1,500 Flat Rate per Emergency Response

Administrative Labor Rate (New)

\$75/Hour, \$125/Nights and Weekends/Holiday

Services including but not limited to: Backhoe, Wheel Loader, QRV Pick UP, Light Tower, Oil/Fuel Spill Kit

He stated these were things the department was already doing, but they are starting to do enough of it that they were seeing a need to charge the responsible party's insurance and possibly recover some of the City's costs that are involved in providing these services.

Debris Removal & Special Collections

Collection Costs

Small Pick Up - \$40 per load (\$5 increase)

Large Foot Trailer - \$80 per load (\$10 increase)

Disposal Fees

Transfer Station - \$65 per ton or current price

Landfill - \$75 per ton or current price

Permit to Dig in Street - \$400 per cut (same)
Re-Inspection Fee (New) - \$75

Cemetery Lot Fees

All fees have been increased. Staff looked at other communities with a cemetery comparable to size and quality as City cemetery. The City is way behind the average of what is being charged for cemetery plots and spaces. The brunt of the increase will be for those not living within the City Limits.

Cemetery Grave Preparation (Residents & Non-Residents)

Monday – Friday \$900 (Increase \$200)
Weekend & Holidays \$1,200 (Increase \$300)

Foundation Fees (Residents & Non-Residents)

\$175 (Increase \$25)

Councilman Smith stated in the Work Session agenda packet he received, he did not see any revenue income in it.

City Manager Scherer replied they were still trying to get a better estimate on what the revenue is. Right now, it is approximately \$16M. They are still getting the NCLM revenue estimates and comparing to their initial estimates. Their intent is to utilize the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to offset some of the shortfalls in the budget.

Councilman Smith asked to be excused from the meeting because he was not going to sit here and listen to a budget of expenditures not knowing the approximate income they will have.

City Manager Scherer stated right now their revenue estimates are \$16M. He anticipates being able to use ARP funding for other things. He only has the initial guidance for using ARP funds but no details.

Councilman Smith stated in 30 years of being a manager of a finance company has he ever had to do a budget without knowing approximately what the income is. When you sit down at a budget meeting you need the figures in front of you. He studied the agenda packet the whole weekend and it is close to \$17M and they have no idea how much income they've got. He said they were saying they were going to use \$2M of the ARP and his opinion on that is they should put back in the reserves the amount they have pulled out so far, about \$800,000.

Mayor Doughtie stated he agreed with Councilman Smith that this is the first time he has sat in a budget meeting without revenues and expenditures beside each other. But it looks like they are having Public Works, Parks & Recreation and Administration today and have another meeting on Thursday. Obviously they will have a couple more meetings before they can make a suggestion on what they are going to do. What is on his mind is the ARP money is like a grant, so if they put that money into salaries and things that are recurring, in three years that money will be gone and those expenses remain. That is a concern to him to put that money into ongoing costs.

Mayor Doughtie excused Councilman Smith from the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Public Works Director Chalker summarized the proposed capital items for FY 2021-2022:

- City Hall Elevator (\$200,000) – ADA Requirement
(Will apply for USDA Grant or USDA low interest loan)
- Leaf Machine (\$35,000) – Last in Service 2018
- Knuckle Boom (\$170,000) – Last in Service 2013
(One truck out of service, two trucks currently down – critical need)
- Trash Truck (\$210,000) – Last in Service 2016
(On 4 year replacement cycle. One truck critical issue)

Capital Items Projected for FY 2022-2023:

- Backhoe (\$90,000) – *Newest one was purchased used 8 years ago.*
- 3 Pickup Trucks (\$90,000) – *Last new trucks (4 of them) were purchased in 2014.*
- Equipment Shed (\$140,000) – *Salt bin & brine plant has displaced equipment. This would also allow equipment to be stored out of the weather.*

Capital Items Projected for FY 2023-2024:

- Knuckle Boom (\$180,000)
- Trash Truck (\$220,000)
- 3 Pickup Trucks (\$90,000)

Parks & Recreation Department
--

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the mission for the Parks & Recreation Department is to serve the community by providing a well-rounded program of activities for all ages and by providing safe, attractive, and clean park, recreation,

library and museum facilities. The budget he will be submitting today, he believes they can accomplish their mission.

He presented his proposed budget for FY 2021-2022 and stated this budget is to reset the budget as it was approved in FY 2019-2020 and returns the 23% reduction from last year. His budget is exactly what they approved in FY 2019-2020.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he anticipates a very busy year as they come out of COVID restrictions and families are looking for recreational opportunities outside. The Canal Trail numbers have increased significantly in this last year which is attributed to the pandemic and being able to be outside and getting families active. As restrictions ease, the department is getting multiple phone calls daily regarding the rental of Kirkwood Adams. Right now the building can be rented with a total capacity of 250 people. They are getting booked quickly. They are also getting phone calls about the opening of the outdoor pool and when they would be opening the Splash Pad. One of the largest numbers of phone calls they are getting is about people wanting to reserve the picnic pavilions in the parks.

He discussed the goals for the upcoming FY 2021-2022 budget.

1. Obtain a pressure test for the lines at the TJ Davis outdoor pool. If the pressure test reveals leaks, the pool will need to be repaired, re-purposed, or demolished due to all the pipes being under the pool. Initial re-purposing ideas is to replace the pool with a splash pad. If grants are to be obtained, this test will need to be done for validity purposes when applying for grants.
2. Demolish tennis courts at Emry and Rochelle parks. Work with Advisory board to re-purpose these recreation areas. Re-purposing ideas would be a dog park, open green space, or small multi-use athletic field.
3. Continue Canal Trail culvert projects with funds from Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau (HCCVB).

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said reverting the TJ Davis budget request back to FY 2019-2020 allows the department to return to youth camps and programs, youth basketball, flag football, adult basketball and softball. It allows them to bring back those athletics and programs to the community that are not in the current budget.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the price for replacing pool with a splash pad.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said that would be a possibility depending on feedback from the City Council and Advisory Board, but he would estimate if they wanted to replace the pool with a pool it would cost \$1M-\$1.5M. If they were looking at replacing the pool with a splash pad, there are several grants they could apply for like the Chaloner Park project. They have \$400,000 in the whole project with \$50,000 designated from City funds. The splash pad at Chaloner was \$135,000-\$140,000. The TJ Davis pool is a larger area so he estimates it would be \$175,000-\$200,000 to replace pool with a splash pad. He also noted there would be other options. The outdoor pool is a training tank which is 3-5 feet then there is a break and there is a diving pool. If one of the leaks were in the diving section, they could save the training pool and put one or two elements of the splash pad where the diving pool was. The pressure test is needed and will give direction on how to go about fixing it or what they could do to repurpose it.

He said the Aquatic Center does include budgeting for the outdoor pool. He feels they could get through the summer. It is hard to tell if it is evaporation or if it is leaks and again the test will help determine that. He has concerns about the outdoor pool. One is obtaining lifeguards. They have two lifeguards on staff right now. Throughout the state, lifeguard training certifications are not current and expired due to COVID. He asked the Aquatics Center Supervisor to put together a lifeguard training class as soon as she could to assist with getting additional lifeguards. He also has concerns about mechanical and plumbing issues that may arise because they have not operated the outdoor pool in a 1-1/2 years.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said their parks budget helps restore part-time help at Kirkwood Adams with reservations, setting up and taking down. It also allows them to open restrooms for park reservations. He and Public Works Director Chalker have discussed the inmate labor program and will restore the program once the NC Department of Corrections can certify that inmates have been vaccinated. He stated he does not know when that will be, but he will check on it.

He said the budget for Chaloner restores part-time help to assist with building and picnic pavilion reservations. Historically, either the building or pavilion is rented almost every Saturday throughout the year and about 50% of the Sundays throughout the year. They have family reunions and birthday parties. This will be the first year the splash pad will be open and they will see an increase in reservations due to that and the new playground and parking there. He announced the splash pad will open on May 1, 2021. They generally close it mid to late

September depending on the weather. That is one of the benefits of a splash pad versus a pool. It can be utilized more months of the year.

He said most operations at the Jo Story Senior Center are grant funded. They will return to operations as restrictions ease. They have slowly started back senior transportation. They are currently transporting seniors twice a week for groceries and household items. Meals on Wheels are being delivered at this time, but congregate meals (seniors come to Lloyd Andrews building) are not back in service yet. He does not know when the County will start back with that, but he will check on it.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated there were no changes for the Lloyd Andrews building other than just reverting back to the original budget. He anticipates Kirkwood Adams will have one of the busiest years coming out of COVID restrictions. Rentals allow for up to 250 people which will allow for a nice size family reunion or wedding reception. They are getting calls daily. He also recommends replacing the carpet at Kirkwood for \$22,000. They get a lot of complaints and when City Council toured the building a few years ago, some of the Council's comments were to replace the carpet at that time as well.

Mayor Doughtie said the restrooms there have never been upgraded either. He asked if there were any grants that could help with that. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said that is a tough grant sell to upgrade restrooms. He will keep looking. City Manager Scherer added that he did not have any definitive guidance on that from the ARP monies, but from what he's read so far he did not believe any of those expenses would qualify.

Mayor Doughtie stated like Councilwoman Bryant has said and many of the Council members feel the same way, they need to do things to their facilities to make people want to come here. And bad restrooms are a real issue, especially for women. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon agreed and said that is one of the biggest complaints you will receive about a public facility or park. If the restrooms are clean and comfortable, people will say that is the best park they've been to. City Manager Scherer asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to get an estimate on what it would cost to upgrade those facilities.

Mayor Doughtie said he discussed with City Manager Scherer about using some of occupancy tax and how the City worked with them and the school system on replacing the tennis courts at TJ Davis. That seemed to work well for everybody. He thought if they could take down the courts at Emry Park and just refurbish the pavement at Rochelle since it already has the fence. He said City Manager Scherer

would speak with them about that. The restrooms are a tourism item to him. A lot of the people that come for family reunions don't live here. Councilwoman Bryant agreed.

Parks & Recreation Director moved on to the next budget, the Library. It also reverts back to the original budget which includes a frozen position that will remain frozen. Although they were not open as many hours, he feels they were successful and able to accommodate the patrons. He recommends continuing current operations by being open three days a week using part-time and not filling a full-time position at this facility. This was the only budget he requested to remain the same and not revert back to FY2019-2020 budget.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked who the current director at the Canal Museum was. He replied they did not have one. They have part-time help who is overseen by Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Kelly Manning. She said Ryan Newsome was excellent. He stated he was still involved with the museum, but was promoted to the department's Maintenance Superintendent when Mr. Moore retired in December. Mr. Newsome is doing a fantastic job as he did at the museum and is a very big part of the Canal Trail. He's a real asset.

Mayor Doughtie asked how much was the grant/stipend the City receives from the State for having a certified librarian. Finance Director Etheridge replied in the past several years it has been running about \$12,000. It did decrease this fiscal year due to the COVID-19 situation and not meeting some of the criteria for the number of patrons, hours open per week, etc. She expects it to go back up when they return to normal operations.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked since the City and the Canal Commission were partners did they contribute financially. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied they do contribute to the Canal Trail. In fact, this past week Vulcan Materials from Skippers, VA donated 225,000 tons of crush and run for the Trail. He stated if Vulcan would do this on an annual basis they would start at the trail head and go all the way down the trail to get a nice crush and run surface. It was a great donation. The Commission has several accounts in a CD. The City takes care of the day-to-day operations, anything outside of that they look for the Canal Commission to handle.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon presented his recommendation for Occupancy Tax for FY 2021-2022.

1. \$15,000 – Canal Trail Maintenance

2. \$4,000 – complete Chockoyotte batting cages and parking lot improvements needed for State and Regional girl’s youth softball tournaments.
3. \$8,000 – Christmas in the park professional features, electrical upgrades, outlets on park light poles to support Christmas features attached to poles and park.

He said further to the conversation earlier he suggested using the \$8,000 towards the Kirkwood Adams restroom upgrade. He asked Councilwoman Bryant for her opinion. She replied that the tourism board would probably look at that favorably because people coming in for family reunions and other events were staying in the hotels.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon recommended to City Council to exclude the \$8,000 towards Christmas in the Park and instead requested those monies be put towards the restroom upgrade at Kirkwood. He believed that would be a better fit. Mayor Doughtie agreed and said the community center serves a large, diverse group of people. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he liked the idea of working with the School Board to ask for some assistance with the renovations at Kirkwood Adams since they utilize the building. For example, prom will be held there Friday night. The City works with the school system well in using the building for a lot of activities and they receive a significant discount.

City Council discussed approaching the school system about the tennis court at Rochelle Park like they did at TJ Davis.

Administration Department

Finance Director Etheridge reviewed the proposed budget for the Administration Department.

She called attention to the E-911 System cost which was originally budgeted at \$320,000. At the present time they have an estimate of \$281,000, so that has been decreased since they received their agenda packets on Friday. She also highlighted a \$25,000 addition for the tennis court project which is part two of the agreement with the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District.

She stated overall for Administration the percentage of change going into next year’s budget is mostly administrative overhead. These are things they cannot control such as retirement percentages going up, insurance costs, etc.

She highlighted the following the items of the Administrative Department:

1. Administrative Department is down 28% because they have split out/created a Human Resources Department which pulls out salary, benefits and specific expenditures that are related to human resources.
2. \$4,000 for Elections (November 2021).
3. Restored Information Systems back to pre-COVID levels.
4. Revenue collections is seeing a reduction in personnel costs.
5. Legal Department was increased.
6. Misc/Contributions - \$1,000 for the Boys & Girls Club this year.
7. Transfers of \$1,256,184 to General Fund for the Theatre.
8. Debt Service has increased slightly to include the First Citizens Bank loan for the vehicles (police/fire) they just ordered. The first payment will be due in FY 2021-2022.

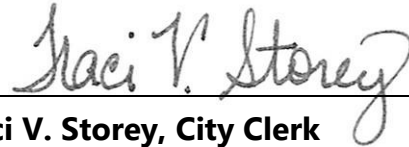
Finance Director Etheridge stated there is not a lot of change in Administration from year to year.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the line item under General Government for Theatre Contractual Advisors where there it was budgeted last year but not for this year. Finance Director Etheridge said last year the City had to pay both financial advisory boards. They had to pay Davenport and Womble & Associates for their assistance in refinancing the Theatre bond. It was a one-time payment so there was no need to include in this year's budget.

Finance Director Etheridge reported the City only had one more payment for Carolina Chips. She explained it was a tax incentive for the company Carolina Chips that the City Council agreed upon. City Manager Scherer added it was an economic development grant that the City provided to them to build a facility next to WestRock and provide 13-15 jobs. It was a 5-year grant of \$125,000 per year and this upcoming year will be the last year. Mayor Doughtie said Halifax County also provided Carolina Chips with a grant as well. The company invested approximately \$40M so basically they were getting tax on about \$20M (50% tax relief). It will be a reduction in expenditures.

Mayor Doughtie stated they would have another Budget Work Session on Thursday and asked City Manager Scherer when they would receive information on revenue. He replied he would have a revenue estimate on Thursday.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci V. Storey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: May 18, 2021