



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, September 7, 2021** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

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

Council Members

Kelly Traynham, Interim City Manager/Planning & Development Director
 Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
 Traci Storey, City Clerk
 Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
 Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager *
 Bobby Martin, Police Chief
 John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
 Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
 Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
 Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

City Department Introductions and Brief Overview

Interim City Manager Traynham stated for the benefit of newly installed Councilman Stainback and for public knowledge, she asked each of the department heads and managers present to give a brief overview of their department and functions.

She said she was the **Interim City Manager and Planning & Development Director**. The Planning Department is responsible for planning, zoning and building compliance activities as well as minimum housing and junk vehicles. They conduct plan reviews for all construction activities within the city limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Finance Director Etheridge stated she works in finance on the second floor in City Hall. She reported the Finance Director position performs complex professional administrative work in planning, organizing and directing the financial activities of the City. The position plans and directs the disbursement and accounting of revenues and expenditures for the City. Supervision of the budget, purchasing, accounting, general

revenue collections and payroll operations. Work is performed in accordance of established municipal financial procedures, local ordinances and NCGS 159 Articles 1-12. Some of the duties include: planning, organizing & supervising operations of the Finance Department; billing & preparation of monthly, quarterly and annual reports; prepares the general operating & capital budgets for management; reviews departmental budget requests; creates the annual budget ordinance & fee schedule; works with managerial staff on formulation of City financial policies; oversees & participates in risk management functions; oversees filing, reception & customer service as it relates to tax queries, questions, billing & citizen concerns; reviews & monitors ongoing administration of budget; assists auditors during annual audit of the City and there have been no management letters or corrective action needed during her tenure with the City; submits monthly financial statements to Council; performs fiscal & trend analysis, revenue forecasting & debt service planning including debt management of the Roanoke Rapids Theatre; performs budget amendment approved by Council; manages all project funds for the City; all fiscal accountability rests on finance and the department for every penny that flows in and out this governmental organization.

Human Resources Manager Kearney said part of her duties was to make sure employees have a safe work environment and treated fairly at all times. She handles all the risk management claims which includes the City's automobile insurance, general liability and property insurance claims as well as workers comp. She manages all the employee benefits that includes the pay plan, health, dental and life insurances; retirement benefits and assists employees upon retirement; NC 401k & Deferred Comp plans; she maintains all personnel records for the City employees – past and present. Her department strives to provide services that improve the development and productivity of a committed and valued workforce. Employees are their greatest asset.

Christina Caudle said she was the **Main Street Development Director** for the City of Roanoke Rapids and the Executive Director for Main Street Roanoke Rapids which is a 14 member non-profit board along with many committee and event volunteers. The Roanoke Rapids Main Street program is a state designated program. They have been involved since late 2009. She came onboard when the City entered into a quasi-public/private partnership to support the Main Street program in early 2014. They have remained in the quasi-public private structure ever since. This means the City funds her position and things that are involved in City duties she handles. The non-profit is managing the Main Street specific projects and events. Although they are separate entities, she flips between the two groups. The Main Street program is a federal program that has been around for 40 years. The purpose is to facilitate economic development using the Main Street America Four Point Approach for revitalization. Those points are Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion and Organization. The NC Department of Commerce is the state coordinating program and have been involved in this program

since the early 1980s. They sign an annual agreement with the State for their services to support the Main Street program. The mission of their local Main Street group is to revitalize the heart and soul of Roanoke Rapids which locally they refer to as Uptown and Downtown. Both entities the non-profit and City support work collectively to make this happen. Over the last ten years they have seen significant investment. They are approaching the \$500 million mark of investment in the last ten years. Since 2015, they have been a nationally accredited Main Street program. That top tiered recognition signifies that their commitment to downtown revitalization is strong. They are using asset based economic development strategies and implementation through the four point approach that is critical to revitalization. Just over half of North Carolina Main Street programs achieve this national accreditation. Out of the thousands of programs nationally, just over 800 receive that accreditation each year, so it is quite an accomplishment.

She said on top of Main Street, there are a lot of other responsibilities that she finds herself in. The first thing is Zoom. Zoom was new to them in early 2020 and now it is an all the time thing. From being able to watch City Council meetings on Spectrum Channel 193 or through Zoom that goes through the Main Street Department. Also, she is the gate-keeper of social media for the City. She manages ArchiveSocial which records in real time all the City's social media public records as well as assisting other departments with any social needs they may have. She assists with any public information officer duties across all departments. She said her office is located on the second floor of City Hall.

Police Chief Martin stated Councilman Stainback was probably more familiar with the **Police Department** than any other department because he worked there for a couple of years. The Roanoke Rapids Police Department has 34 sworn full-time employees and 2 part-time officers at this time. They have 44 when they are fully staffed. They hold the certifications of 18 reserve officers and they have 4 non-sworn personnel. One serves as Animal Control and three are Administrative Assistants. The department structure features the Uniform Patrol Division, Criminal & Narcotics Investigations Division and Proactive Community Engagement Team (P.A.C.E.) along with their Animal Control Officer. The Uniform Patrol Division is comprised of four different 12-hour shifts which work 24 hours 7 days a week. The other divisions work a variety of schedules relating to their own job tasks. The department averages approximately 25,000 calls throughout the year. Their response time is within five minutes or less.

Fire Chief Patrick stated before he gave his departmental overview, he wanted to remind everyone why he was wearing the green shirt. September is Lymphoma Awareness Month. The fire fighters will be wearing their green shirts throughout this month in memory of Chief Hawkins who passed away in 2019 from lymphoma. He said the

Roanoke Rapids Fire Department has two stations and currently has 32 full time members. They have 5 office personnel and the other 27 are assigned to shift work. There are three shifts consisting of 9 fire fighters per shift which is a 24 hour shift. They work 24 hours and off 48 hours. They work roughly 216 hours in a 28-day pay period. Over the past 25 years, the Fire Department has changed a lot from technology to daily activities for their shift personnel and to the emergency calls they respond to. Their primary job is to protect lives and property through fire prevention and suppression. They also respond to vehicle accidents to provide patient care and assist with entrapment and contain fluid spills and clean up. They also respond to true medical emergencies and assist upon request from EMS. One of the important services the department does is inspect buildings. The inspections are mandated by the state of North Carolina on an inspection schedule. The type of business in the building determines how often it needs to be inspected. The inspectors are not only making these businesses safer by correcting violations, but also educating the business owners on the importance of having that safe environment for all the citizens and visitors patronizing the business. This division provides safety programs for local schools on fire prevention. They provide classes on CPR and First Aid as well. In the last two years they have tried to provide fire prevention in the city's older adult communities.

He stated when they are not responding to fire emergencies, fire fighters on shift are maintaining the two buildings and grounds. This includes cleaning and maintaining equipment. They work diligently throughout the year to maintain their ISO rating which is something they are very proud of. In 2019, they were able to drop their ISO rating from a 4 to a 3. When they are able to do that, it lowers the premiums for the city's businesses and industry. For every point they drop it saves approximately 8%. He reported a 5 was the lowest rating that helps residential insurance rates. One of the services that causes them to do this is annual fire hydrant testing. They inspect, maintain and flush 788 hydrants every year. Another part of the rating process is that each one of the fire personnel acquire 240 man hours of training each year. All their fire hoses and trucks must be inspected as well. They have over 10,000 feet of fire hose that has to come off the truck to be inspected and tested. They also conduct pre-fire surveys which includes contact information of the owner and drawing of the tax map. All this information is added to their tablets that they maintain on the truck and can be pulled up on scene of an emergency. Their goal is to continue to keep the city a safer place and reduce the insurance rating as much as they can to save the taxpayers money.

Public Works Director Chalker shared information about the **Public Works Department**. They have the best 43 employees in Public Works in the whole United States who really care about what they do and work hard every day. They have 8 frozen positions right now. The Public Works department consists of 7 departments: Street, Sanitation, Refuse, Property Maintenance, Building Maintenance, Cemetery and the

Truck Garage. He reported some facts and averages. Every week they dump 6,200 roll out trash cans which equates to 322,400 trash cans per year. A worker on the back of the trash truck dumps approximately 80,000 trash cans themselves. They haul 6,500 tons of trash to the transfer station in Weldon and haul 1700 tons of junk and 14,000 cubic yards of limbs. In the cemetery they average 12 burials a month and 144 per year. They sell 5 lots a month and 60 per year. On average they collect \$15,220 per month which averages out to \$182,640 per year. Last year they collected over \$192,000 so it was well over an average year. The truck garage consists of one supervisor and 3 mechanics that maintain a fleet of 257 units. That is everything from police cars, fire trucks, public works trucks, lawnmowers, generators to light towers. They have to keep it all running. They do about everything except for front end alignment. The oldest thing they have is 1984 tractor. The Street Department has 7 employees (2 are supervisors). They maintain 95 miles of City streets, not including the alley system. Because of the ground they cover, they interface with the public every day and go to every residence in the city at least once a week as well as the businesses where they dump their trash. They do their very best to support every other City department on a daily basis.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said the **Parks & Recreation Department's** mission is to serve the community by providing a well-rounded program of activities for all ages and by providing safe, attractive and clean park and recreation facilities. They support this mission with 20 full time positions and 25 part-time employees. They operate and maintain 13 parks from parks offering full amenities to green space parks. They have 9 athletic fields that are active 7 days a week 10 months out of the year. They maintain the 8 mile Canal Trail. They have 8 facilities including TJ Davis Recreation Center, the Aquatic Center, Chaloner Recreation Center, Jo Story Senior Center, Lloyd Andrews Council Chambers, Roanoke Canal Museum, Kirkwood Adams Community Center and the Public Library. The building that has more patrons visit annually is the Jo Story Senior Center and right behind that is the Public Library and then TJ Davis Recreation Center. They operate 7 days a week between being open to the public and the athletic games and practices are wide open. About every one of their facilities are able to be rented and they have many rentals on the weekends. They do some major special programs such as the upcoming Canal Half Marathon and the Christmas Parade.

Mayor Doughtie referred back to what the Finance Director said about the audit. Ever since Ms. Etheridge has been here, they have always gotten excellent audits. That not only comes from her department because when the City Council makes the budget the department heads have to follow the budget. He was proud of all the department heads and staff that works in those departments. Everyone knows the City did not have a lot of money to be frivolous with in the past 10-12 years. When the auditor comes each year he expresses his surprise that the City has been able to do what they have done with

having to pay out a sizable amount of dollars to debt. They still have some vacant positions in some departments that they hopefully with things looking up they can get back up to full staff. He was proud of the way the City's employees have handled the citizen's money.

American Rescue Plan Act Funding

Interim City Manager Traynham stated as noted in the previous session, the City has received its first allocation of ARP funds in the amount of \$2.28M. City Council has approved its resolution and budget ordinance. They are setting things up to start spending the funds as allowed. By the end of October the City has to submit to the State basically a project and expenditure report of the activities that have occurred since they have received the funding. Every year the City would have to submit a report. They are still awaiting final guidance from the Treasurer's Office about the spending. There is some more information being provided. The purpose of tonight was to initiate some conversations. They have until 2026 to expend the funds. This is not something they want to bring before Council and have done in one session. It is important for staff to know what questions there are in order to answer those. She understands there are several Council members that have ideas, wants or needs. They will not get a clear yes or no whether certain things are allowed. They will have to have justification.

Interim City Manager Traynham reviewed the five areas of funding.

1. Support public health expenditures - It helps with vaccination programs, medical expenses, contact tracing, enforcement of public health orders, public communication efforts, capital investment in facilities to meet pandemic operational needs (that could help improve technology in Lloyd Andrews and other meeting buildings for virtual environments plus ventilation improvements in certain settings).
2. Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency - The City could deliver assistance to workers, families, small businesses, speeding the recovery of tourism, travel and the hospitality sectors and rebuilding the public sector capacity. (The City could use that money to rebuild employment structures prior to the pandemic. She advised any salary actions that are done should be one-time expense not recurring expense)
3. Replace lost public sector revenue - there is a very strict formula that has to be followed for that. They will work with that to see if there is any opportunity for reimbursements for any lost revenue.
4. Provide premium pay for essential workers- There are different degrees of what is essential and what is not. Most of those who work for the City have had to come into the office at some sort; they have not been able to do their jobs 100% remotely. They are public servants so they serve the public.

5. Invest in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure (Includes stormwater infrastructure) – the City of Roanoke Rapids did not have its own water and sewer division, stormwater infrastructure is a great opportunity for funding because many state and federal programs do not cover that.

She stated some of the ineligible uses have been kind of explained. They cannot use it to fund debt service, legal settlements or judgments and cannot deposit for rainy day funds.

Interim City Manager said there is information coming down from the Treasury Office on how to use the funds and as long as it can be justified she feels they will be able to make appropriate expenditures. Some communities are allocating certain percentages in certain areas or coming up with certain plans on how to fund these. She discussed with departmental staff about trying to have a plan for this spending, applying criteria and rating. To identify projects, score them, rank them then prioritize them for implementation at City Council's discretion. The ARPA is a great thing to have and they have a lot of needs in the community. They want to make sure they use it the best way possible in meeting the objectives of the funding itself.

Councilwoman Bryant asked if infrastructure included street improvements and paving. Interim City Manager Traynham replied if they could tie it to stormwater improvements which surfacing of streets has to do with water quality and quantity. She is under the impression it could be if justified to that degree.

Councilman Smith stated they have a lot of streets that flood so they could use the money to correct some of these places public works has trouble with. Interim City Manager Traynham added that stormwater isn't just about the flooding. Anytime water falls from the sky in the form of rainwater, when it hits the ground it becomes stormwater. Water is going to go where gravity pulls it. The City's stormwater channels into the lake and river which are drinking water sources. The environmental component is key.

Councilman Smith asked if Public Works could look at the places that cause them the most problems and set up a priority list. Interim City Manager Traynham said they have already been working on a plan for certain projects based on the highest needs. That is something they can come back to Council in the future. He asked about equipment the City needs. Interim City Manager Traynham said if it can be tied to some of these certain projects or depending on what kind of equipment he was referring to. If it is something they are able to justify and relate it back to the priority areas. What matters is how it comes down to the auditing in the end.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they could contact someone to ask about the things they would consider spending it on. Interim City Manager Traynham does not believe they would get one person to say whether the expenditure is approved or not.

Councilman Smith confirmed the funds were funneled through the federal government to the State and asked if the City received these funds from the State. Interim City Manager Traynham replied yes. He asked if they would have to go by State and federal guidelines because he State will be set up different than federal. She said yes and federal guidelines will be little broader but they should complement each other.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked Public Works Director Chalker about the camera that was look at all the drains. He said she was speaking about their storm drain camera system that was provided through a grant from the Rural Center. They still have it and it is very useful.

Mayor Doughtie asked Public Works Director if they would be able to upgrade the alleys. He replied they have an open PO for \$10,000 for rock. Most of the rock is used for the alley system. Alleys in different spots have different drainage profiles. For the past nine years they have been trying to work their way through that. If they could tie some of that work to storm drainage they may be able to do a little more. He reminded them if they do not do it properly the city would have to pay for it themselves. The caution is on the front end to make sure it is within the guidelines. He said there was some equipment that the City does not own such as an excavator and the truck and trailer to haul the excavator. Also a vac truck to suck out the sediment, sand and trash out of the boxes from the storm drains on the street. He added the City has been trying to map its stormwater system. That project needs to be accelerated so they know where are and where they are going and dumping out into the river. Interim City Manager Traynham said most stormwater activities do require an engineer to sign off on it. Public Works Director Chalker said right now they have 24 projects identified that they can make use of some or most of these funds. A lot of the projects are very visible. The residents in those neighbors have been very patient knowing they do not have the money to do what they need to do every year.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee would like to see the City come up with a process for this more so than anything else. They probably have any one area that could utilize this money. He would like them to come up with a percentage of what they were looking at spending in that department. Once it's gone, they have spent their allotment. He suggested they reach out the NCLM because they have all the cities and towns doing the same thing. He would like to see that before they spend a dime.

Interim City Manager Traynham agreed and said that is why she wanted to start the

conversation. No money will be spent until staff has Council's blessing of how to distribute and prioritize the spending of the funds. That is why she opened up tonight by saying this would be the first of several discussions. At the next work session she would like to propose a couple different plan options. Either by percentages or some other methods that are used. For instance if they did not want to do it by department they could do it based upon categories of need and identify projects within those categories. The department heads and managers have been going through and trying to identify needed projects regardless of the funding source. For the next work session meeting in October, they will sit down and discuss these things again in order to move forward in a future regular meeting as far as doing some funding allocations.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated early in the process it mentioned that some of the funds could be used to replenish any lost revenue funds that would go back to the fund balance part of it. For example, the City was getting revenue from Kirkwood Adams rentals and they lost \$100,000, but due to COVID they could not rent the facility. The City was getting \$100,000 prior to the pandemic and now its \$50,000, to him that is lost revenue.

Interim City Manager Traynham said they could look at to bring to City Council's attention. These are points that staff can do its own research and development over the next couple of weeks. She said there was specific guidance on how to calculate those formulas for lost revenue.

Councilwoman Bryant stated based on the CDBG grant, the city has a large percent of housing that is very old and asked if some of those monies could be used to update or bring some of the substandard housing up to par. It also mentioned health disparities and the city has an aging population so she would like them to consider assisting in some way in that area.

Councilman Smith asked if the City had been in contact with the NCLM. He believed they had someone on staff to discuss how this money could be spent. Interim City Manager Traynham replied the NCLM and many other organizations have regular webinars or Zoom calls for governments to call and ask questions. Many of the department leaders have been listening and participating in those. There is tremendous support from the NCLM and those other organizations to help guide the implementation and spending of funds. Many of the other governments will have the same needs.

Councilman Smith stated the City was at a turning point with some development. For example, the McCrory building is one of them. He knew there would be some asbestos removal. He asked if some of these funds could be used to help the City take that step forward. Interim City Manager Traynham said they have found that there are several categories that can be used for assistance to non-profit organizations and housing as

well as to promote jobs and businesses. She believes the City should consider some application from those interested parties and see how it could be spread out. Community revitalization and those efforts can apply. Many projects do not fit just one particular definition.

2020 Census and Redistricting Requirements

Interim City Manager Traynham stated federal and state law requires the City review its electoral district boundaries or voting districts with every federal decennial census. This year because of COVID, the census data was late being released. On August 12, 2021, the Census Bureau officially released the data. She distributed the City's current Voting District Map.

She reported the last time the City reviewed its voting boundaries was in 2007 and some adjustments were made at that time. The City does not know if they will have to redistrict or not, but they have to go through the activities of quantifying the data to ensure the districts are proportional. They have three districts. District 1 and 2 are represented by two individuals while District 3 is represented by one individual, the goal is to make sure each person is counted for approximately equal proportions.

Interim City Manager Traynham said with the release of Census 2020 data, the state intends to send the City some software for downloading by September 30, 2021. In the past, working individuals had to go to Raleigh and use their computers. She explained the primary reason they need to have this done pretty quickly is because the City needs to notify the Halifax County Board of Elections by November 12, 2021 if the voting district map will be updated on or before November 17th. If this is complete by the deadline, filing for upcoming elections on March 8, 2022 will be in December. They could ask for a 30-day extension to December 17, 2021 but that would push the filing from December to January.

She said the City and interested persons will conduct a study of the data to ensure there is not a difference, more or less than 5% in each voting district. Right now, they do not know what it is and may not have to make any changes, but they have to go through the process of the redistricting program. She would like the City to try to maintain the deadline of November 17th for compliance. She believes they can do it especially if the software is what they say it's going to be.

Interim City Manager Traynham said the City wants to make sure they are following all applicable laws that if any redrawing of boundaries is required they need to make sure each Council member remains in their district. They want to make sure there is no disparities or gerrymandering and keep a balance of population and demographics. They need to try to follow thoroughfares and natural boundaries and divide certain formal

neighborhoods or subdivisions into two different districts. They are legally required to do this.

She said at the next Council meeting on September 21, 2021, she would like to see if City Council would like to appoint a committee, specific individuals, City staff or members of the public to help be responsible to review the data. They are required to have public comment on the data. Beginning very soon, they need to make known that if anyone has any comments on the 2020 Census data that need to contact the City Clerk. If they do need to amend the City's voting district boundaries, a public hearing would be required before that. They need to look at the data, consider the geographical boundaries and seek citizen input before making a recommendation to City Council. She was seeking some direction on whether Council would like a committee and who would they like that to be. She advised to keep it at a limited group – no more than ten people.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how were the voting district boundaries set up initially. Interim City Manager Traynham replied that was a good question. She went through the files and there were two districts initially and goes back to the establishment with the City Charter and voting districts. The only at-large membership is the mayor. They have been amended at times due to annexations and de-annexations.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee reported back in 1992 there was a suit brought against the City to have a minority district. That is part of the reason District 3 was brought about. Whenever there is a redistricting, the Department of Justice calls and asks him if he is satisfied with the redistricting. He believes there should be a committee in order to meet these tight deadlines. He recalled going to Raleigh in the past to review the data. He stated the first part is to determine if there has been a 5% change.

Interim City Manager Traynham agreed and stated it needs to be a public process. She would like Council to come up with some names and appoint a committee at the September 21, 2021 meeting.

Councilman Smith questioned whether they should form a committee because it's difficult keeping the other City committees up. Interim City Manager Traynham said the committee could consist of City staff members, elected officials or certain appointed persons. The individuals would help to conduct the process. She said as a planner, she would not want to do this alone. If she had to make recommendation for modifications to the district boundary map, she did not want it to fall on her or one person. People with different interests or have at least one member of the public who resides in each district would be good.

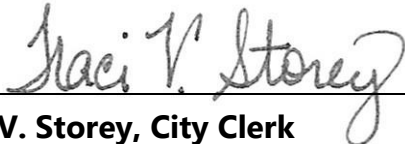
Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if she could provide the list of those on the committee in prior years. Interim City Manager Traynham said she had the list but did not recognize many of the names.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said first it needs to be a determination if there is a 5% change and whatever district that 5% is in, a Council member needs to be a representative on the committee. Interim City Manager Traynham agreed and said if changes are needed there are certain guidelines that need to be followed. They need to follow the street right-of-ways and use existing boundaries because when they modify boundaries they need to achieve a population balance. It is not just about moving a line. She said staff could handle reviewing the calculations and then have a committee review and confirm them. If they needed to make changes they could call on the committee and have a special meeting prior to the second meeting in October.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee confirmed that they already know there is over a 5% change in the total population so there is a change somewhere. Interim City Manager Traynham said yes, but it depends on where it is distributed. They should receive the link for the software and data by September 30th.

Councilman Smith asked if they could plan for a committee to be appointed on September 21st. Interim City Manager Traynham said they could plan for it to be formal action item or Council can continue to discuss it. Once she receives the information and the ability to use the software, she would like to move quickly.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: October 19, 2021