



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, October 5, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.** 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.

## **2020 Census and Redistricting Program: Update & Next Steps**

Interim City Manager Traynham said she had been working on the Census data and had spoken to a few of them about it. At the next meeting in two weeks, she will ask that Council bring an individual they would like to represent their voting district in the study of this data. She asked for the contact information ahead of time. She requested the information be given to the City Clerk Storey so City Council could formally approve a list of the working committee.

She reported since the last meeting the software program had been effectively released. It is a Microsoft Access shell program. It has a few of the queries in there. She downloaded the data and was able to pull information by coding for the voting district but it comes up by the voting precincts which is not the same. In the past couple of days she has been in touch with the Halifax County Board of Elections and today she spoke with Kristin Scott. Ms. Scott plans to talk to Doris Hawkins, the Tax Coordinator, and a

few others to get the data needed. There has to be a way to figure it out because when someone registers to vote by their address, they know which voting district they reside in. There is a lot of technical data and she's hoping the County will be able to assist the City with that. She believes they were getting close. At this point she still does not know if the City will need to redistrict or not. That question still remains. Once they get the data up for each voting district, they will be able to access it and make that determination based upon the percentages of potential change.

Mayor Doughtie asked if each Council member was to select one person from their voting district to serve on a committee. She replied yes, they discussed the matter at the last meeting.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how many districts the City had. Interim City Manager Traynham replied three. Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if District 1 was the only district with two Council members. Interim City Manager Traynham said Districts 1 and 2 have two Council members. They represent proportionally equal population compared to District 3 which is represented by one person. Councilwoman Scarbrough confirmed that the districts with two Council members will have two appointees on the committee.

Interim City Manager Traynham stated until they have the population data for each voting district, they were not sure how much work they would need to do. She hopes to extract that data prior to the next meeting. Either way, it will be good to have those appointees in place. If she and staff pull the data and determine that everything looks like it is within the 5% standard, it may be a good idea for the committee to look at the data and say they agree. If changes are needed they would help redraw the lines to achieve the equality of the representation in the district boundary.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee referred to a previous handout and said they had discussed the data from 2010 versus 2000 versus 2020. He asked if that total percent change was 3%.

She said the percentage change was a 3.33% decrease from 2010 to 2020, but the current voting district map was based on the year 2000 data. That makes a difference that represents approximately a 10% change in population total. From 2000 to 2010 the population decreased by 7.09%. From 2010 to 2020 it decreased another 3.3%. That tells them there has been a 10% loss over 20 years, but until they can map out the locations where that population loss occurred they will not know whether or not redistricting is going to be warranted. She added she had checked many sources and cannot find any record of a review of the voting district map following the 2010 Census.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said from the numbers it sounds like there will be a redistricting,

but they just don't know where. Interim City Manager Traynham said it all depends on how it is spread out across the voting districts. Based on the City's population number of 15,239 and with five Council members so each Council member effectively represents 3,048 people. That is by persons not eligible voters. For instance District 1 has two people so multiply 3,048 x 2 for a total of 6,096 being the ideal population with District 3's ideal population being 3,048. That is where they want to determine what the 2020 population is and the deviation of change because it is based upon the data from when the maps that were done in 2007. In 2007 the map was using 2000 Census data. She referred to Table 3 on page of 3 of 5 on the memorandum demonstrating the Population Equity and Statistically Fair Representation. Under the 2020 Census Review based on population 15,239 where they have TBD (to be determined), those are the figures they need to fill in to determine if the substantial equity exists.

Councilwoman Bryant asked once she gets those numbers and City Council gives the names of their appointees to the City Clerk, will they contact the appointee on committee to set up a meeting. Interim City Manager Traynham replied yes, they could do that. She would like City Council to approve the list of people for the committee in the meeting on October 19, 2021. She asked for the appointee's information before then.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if they were just looking for basic information. She replied name, phone number, address so they could verify their district location. If they have email that would helpful.

Councilman Stainback asked if they had to be a registered voter. She replied there was not requirement for that. The requirement is they reside in the district.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if he had someone in mind and they were not in District 3, but they were in a voting district, should that matter. She replied that was up to City Council because in the last meeting City Council decided to select a person from their respective districts. If they would like change that, Council can discuss it.

### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA Funding)**

Interim City Manager Traynham stated she wanted to continue discussions about the American Rescue Plan Act, the allocation and what the City can/cannot do or want to do with the funding. City staff and department heads have come up with some preliminary ideas and needs that may not necessarily be considered for ARPA funding or not. Some items are needed no matter what. It is important that when they look at what the departmental needs are that they consider multiple funding sources for those needs. If the need is not eligible for ARPA funds, then spend ARPA on another expense and choose to fund it out of the budget. It is a balancing of the funds.

She announced since the last meeting the UNC School of Government has opened registration for a free online course. She sent City Council an email with the registration and asked departmental representatives to be present for it as well. She gave each of them a detailed schedule of the dates for the online training. They could register as an individual attendee and even if they want to attend one course their registration is for all of them. She reviewed the detailed schedule pointing out there were some times that would address smaller populations so they would not need to attend. She noted one of the most important days would be on Friday, October 22: Eligible Uses. She stated the State has said they will not say what is allowed or not; they would not get the verbal okay. It will be all about the documentation. The earlier dates will address what would be required for the justification and explaining why they would use the funds for that expenditure.

Interim City Manager Traynham said the City has had a limited budget for a lot of capital expenditures among other things. She did not believe they would have any problem spending it, but it's the matter of the documentation and getting things done. They need to consider needs versus wants plus the public benefit or consequence. These are the things she asked department heads to be thinking about.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said earlier in the process there was a request to look at a general pie chart as to percentages. They should have some idea on the percentage they want to spend in certain areas. He would like to see a pie chart so they don't spend all the funds in one area.

Interim City Manager Traynham stated she believed they could do some of that, but if they allocate by department they were going to see the departments crossover such as public safety or economic development.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they were going to get some input from the department heads like they do for the budget. She replied yes and had talked about doing some of that tonight. She said there are parks and recreation improvements that are desired, facility maintenance that is needed, technologies and various things. She would like for as many people to participate in the UNC School of Government program over those six sessions and come back in November to discuss it more at the departmental level. They will have a better idea of the requirements and obligations under the expenditures of that funding. She also anticipates by then the final guidance will be available.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if the training was on Zoom and if so where could they view it because she did not have the capacity to use Zoom at her house. Interim City Manager Traynham said they were welcome to view it at City Hall and asked if anyone wanted to join at City Hall to please let her know in advance so she can figure out which

location they needed to use.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee questioned to the online training schedule where it lists Smaller Units (Under 7,000 population) and Mid-Large Units under the same time frame. Interim City Manager Traynham replied she would contact the School of Government for clarification.

Councilman Smith asked if the Finance Director would be sitting in on these sessions. Interim City Manager Traynham replied yes if she registers. He said he would like department heads to present a list of needs, not a wish list, prior to this course so when she is sitting in on these meetings she can help determine if they would meet the requirements or not. Interim City Manager Traynham stated she asked the department heads or a representative of their department to participate and listen in on the sessions to get a better understanding of program. He asked if the department heads had already given her a list. She replied she had some preliminary needs. They have not gone through a full list of all the needs because they typically start to look at that as they are preparing the annual budget. It would be a good time to start looking at the anticipated needs are for the next fiscal year and determine what potential funding sources are available. She would like City Council to review the list and what they would desire to have funded out of it.

Interim City Manager Traynham stated they were still in the preliminary stage of moving forward with this. They are basically telling governments to not be in a hurry to spend it right now. She said they would have several discussion meetings about ARP funding.

Councilman Smith confirmed that the City had until 2026 to spend the money. She replied that was correct and they had until December 2023 to identify what the money will be spent on so they have two years to do that.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they were expecting additional funding. Interim City Manager Traynham said yes, they have received half of the funding (\$2.28M) and will receive the second allotment next August. They were supposed to receive it one year from the receipt of the first deposit. Unless something changes from the federal level.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the City was going to solicit citizen input. He feels public safety is a priority, but there are people in the community with other wants and needs. Interim City Manager Traynham said one of the School of Government sessions addresses citizen participation. She feels getting public input is important. They could try to develop a community survey. If City Council would like staff to solicit involvement, they can easily try to do that in different ways.

Councilwoman Bryant stated she thought that would be a good idea. They have talked about losing population and hopefully some of the younger members in the community will share some things they would like to see.

Interim City Manager Traynham said for example they could develop a survey using Survey Monkey where people can go online to complete it. They can develop the questions in order to get good information. For those who do not have internet access, they could have paper surveys available and staff will enter the results into the computer.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee restated he would like to see a pie chart because it could be two or three items from police and fire and all the money is gone. He said he would get with her on it.

Interim City Manager Traynham said one idea they have talked about is technology upgrades. She does not believe Zoom and virtual meetings are going to go away any time soon. Right now they were streaming off of an iPad from the library and replacing batteries in their microphones every meeting. People do not want to come out to meetings like they did before. Whether they don't want to be around people or its getting dark. They could get more public participation in local government discussions by calling in or some other method; not everyone is going to use Facebook and not everyone has Spectrum channel 193. They want to create opportunities where everyone can participate.

Councilman Smith said there was a lot of important stuff that needs to be done with this money. Some of the things he believed they needed to do was find a way to fix the elevator at City Hall; they have old equipment down at Public Works and a fire truck that is 45 years old. They have some priorities. He understands they need to let the citizens get involved, but they need to tell them what the City's needs are right now. If they do not spend this money wisely, they will have a problem down the road.

Mayor Doughtie stated Kirkwood Adams was another place that needs some upgrades. It is about the only place in town other than a church people can have a gathering. It has been there 50 years and basically never had any money spent on it.

Interim City Manager Traynham agreed. She said there is a fire alarm system there that is not functioning right now. Every event requires employees to be onsite for fire watch. She said the last quote for the fire alarm system was \$30,000, a new roof estimated at \$60,000 and restrooms upgrades at \$50,000 for a total of \$160,000. Parks & Recreation Director added that the roof was a priority; restrooms need major upgrades and a facelift plus electrical and technology needs.

Interim City Manager Traynham said she realizes this is overwhelming and confusing. She hopes participation in the School of Government program in these six sessions during the month of October will help them have a better understanding.

**Miscellaneous**

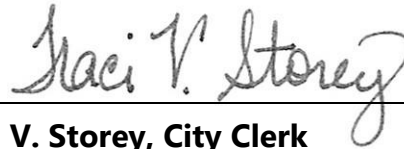
Councilman Smith thanked all the departments for what they did this past weekend with the RRHS Centennial celebration. They did an excellent job.

Interim City Manager Traynham commended the City staff because they anticipated all scenarios. When you plan in advance and exercise that plan everyone can react in a timely manner. She reported they set up the command post at City Hall on Friday night.

Councilman Stainback said he would like to reiterate what Councilman Smith and the Mayor said. He stated the school system could not have done this without the City. He was appreciative of the help they gave the school system. It was a very successful weekend.

Interim City Manager Traynham announced next Wednesday there will be a Flu Shot Clinic at City Hall from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.



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**Traci V. Storey, City Clerk**

**Approved by Council Action on: October 19, 2021**