



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Wednesday, November 3, 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, 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  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

### **Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau Annual Report**

Ms. Lori Medlin, President and CEO of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau gave a presentation on the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Annual Report. She stated they were dedicated to promoting Halifax County as a visitor's destination. They are primarily funded by a 5% room tax that visitors leave when they stay in the accommodations here in Halifax County; no local tax dollars are used in their efforts. In addition to the 5% tax, the City of Roanoke Rapids has a 1% tax dedicated to the marketing and tourism development of the City. In March 2020, the pandemic hit. It required they share authoritative information about the pandemic and they did this will a new motto – Halifax County Strong. Today, they believe they are on the road to recovery.

She highlighted the following in her presentation:

- Visitors to and within Halifax County spent \$85.9 million in 2020. This is a decrease of 23.2% from 2019.

- State tax revenue generated in Halifax County totaled \$4.1 million through state sales and excise taxes, and taxes on personal and corporate income.
- \$3.2 million in local taxes were generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel-supported businesses.
- Visitor spending in Halifax County saved each taxpayer \$143.32 in taxes in 2020.
- Occupancy Tax Collections
  - FY 2020/2021- \$141,727.90
  - FY 2019/2020- \$132,307.40
  - FY 2018/2019- \$152,502.73.
- 2020-2021 Occupancy Tax Expenditures

	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Occupancy Tax Receipts	\$146,300	\$137,476.07
Roanoke Canal Museum	\$8,000	\$8,000
Roanoke Canal Trail Maintenance	\$15,000	\$15,000
Sponsorships/Roanoke Ave Promotions	\$5,000	\$5,000
Marketing/Advertising	\$38,450	\$35,183.50
Billboards	\$17,000	\$17,000
Administrative Expenses	\$14,000	\$13,316.16
Hotel Security	\$20,000	\$20,000
TJ Davis Rec Project	\$25,000	\$25,000
Interstate Lighting Project	\$3,300	\$1,586.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$146,300</b>	<b>\$140,086.12</b>

- Social Media continues to be a priority for marketing our destination. They have 13,473 followers.
- Most viewed platform is Facebook with 1,471,541 impressions, 97,460 engagements and 11,987 clicks to our posted links. Facebook engagements were up 48.2% this year and Instagram engagements increased 72.4%.
- One of their goals was to enhance the visibility of our lodging partners and promote one of their lodging partners each month on social media channels.
- Billboards speak to their largest audience, Interstate 95. They reached 132 million impressions last year.
- The HCCVB Print Promotions reached over 14,102,082.
- HCCVB partnered to bring the Harriett Tubman statue to Halifax County and proud of their part in creating the Halifax County Underground Railroad Trail.
- Began to plan Halifax 2026 to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Nation and signing of the Halifax Resolves and Declaration of Independence.
- Worked on interchange development at Exit 173 site in Weldon. Will see some new development there soon.
- Rep. Michael Wray has put a lot in the budget for tourism projects. \$1,025,000 to make the Roanoke River a Paddle Trail. (Shared with Roanoke and Dan rivers).

Purchase of Andrew Jackson School \$150,000 grant funds for establishment of a museum to supplement the Freedom Trail and Halifax Underground Railroad. Main Street assistance for Enfield, Roanoke Rapids and Weldon.

- Supported Halifax County events with sponsorships.
- Attraction Visitation: Medoc Mountain – 163,000; Sylvan Heights – 50,040; Roanoke Canal Museum – 37,421; Historic Halifax – 21,180; Dog Run – 37,926.

Councilman Smith stated he knows how much the HCCVB does for the baseball program and how many people they bring into town. He thanked her for backing them.

### **Future Budget Amendment Request for Roll Out Trash Containers**

Public Works Director Chalker stated in the next City Council meeting, they will be requesting a budget amendment in the amount of \$29,000 for the purchase of some new trashcans to put out for city residents. Historically, about every two years they buy the trashcans. The price of the trash cans are \$56.50 each. \$29,000 will get them 513 trashcans.

He said the sanitation employees do an excellent job of repairing these trashcans. They have the parts in stock. They are not satisfied with quality of the current brand/manufacturer so they going to change the vendor to a trashcan they have been testing for five years. This is not a hasty decision to change the trashcans. They are hopeful that the new trashcans will be a better quality and hold up better.

Finance Director Etheridge stated that historically the City does purchase trashcan replacements every two years. The last bulk purchase was January 3, 2019. The City is due to replace the trashcans. She recommends waiting until Greg Redman, CPA gives findings at the next regular City Council meeting regarding fund balance before moving forward. She stated the trashcans are needed and it is time for replacement.

Councilman Smith asked if the fee the City charges the citizens of Roanoke Rapids pay for trashcans. Public Works Director Chalker replied yes. It is approximately \$1.3M that is collected for the Solid Waste Fees. Part of the fee is destined to cover the cost of the trashcans. Councilman Smith asked if there were residents out there now that need their trashcans replaced. Public Works Director Chalker replied yes and their stock level is down below the 100 limit which triggers them to do something like this. He added at budget time they requested the trashcans, but it did not get brought forward in the request from the City Manager to the City Council with the understanding that if they got too low they would need to request a budget amendment to purchase them.

Councilman Smith stated he did not see why City Council could not approve the request at the next City Council meeting.

Mayor Doughtie asked if he foresaw any problems in getting the trashcans. Public Works Director Chalker replied no. He reported the trashcan price had increased \$2 per can since the last time they quoted them. The price he gave earlier was the price quoted this morning and he hopes they will hold that price for them if the budget amendment is adopted at the City Council meeting on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **2020 Census and Redistricting Update**

City Manager Traynham said since the last meeting she has been in contact with the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments. They do not have a person on staff that can do the work but through their connections with the different COGs, the Cape Fear Council of Governments has staff that is available to help assist the City with the mapping. By going through the COG, it should be very affordable price for looking at the current boundaries and data and possible modifications. They would use the GIS program and their staff is much more skilled in this area.

She reported she and City Clerk Storey were working on a letter to send the Redistricting Committee members to let them know what was going on. She stated it would be appropriate at this point to notify the Halifax County Board of Elections that they do not anticipate they will have an adopted map before November 17<sup>th</sup>. That way the City can get a 30 day extension to December 17, 2021. They need to keep in mind the map changes would have to be reviewed by the Department of Justice. The only consequence of the 30 day extension would be the filing period for elections. It would be moved from December to January. The Election Day for the local Council members and Mayor would remain March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Smith said by doing this it would be pushing those wanting to get involved to the limits. City Manager Traynham replied she wished they had the resources to make this process go faster. She should hear back from the Cape Fear COG representative no later than Friday. The deadline for contacting the Halifax County Board of Elections is November 12, 2021 to say whether not the City will have their map adopted by November 17<sup>th</sup>. This is primarily due to the delay in the Census Bureau releasing the data and the delay in the programing and software. She made her best effort to do it in house and to extract the data that was needed. She believes the efficiency will be improved by utilizing the COG and at a much more affordable rate than if the City were to hire a third-party consultant.

Councilman Smith asked if she had been in any discussion with the Redistricting Committee at all. City Manager Traynham replied they have not had a formal meeting or discussion at this point. Again, they are reaching out to the committee this week. Councilman Smith asked if each one of the appointees had been notified about their position on the committee. She said she had not been in contact with them at this point.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee added not other than the individuals that selected them. He believed that was what the letter was going to do that is going out this week.

Councilman Smith stated he would like to see the committee notified as soon as possible. He did not like procrastination.

Mayor Doughtie said he believed City Manager Traynham was asking City Council for a consensus that it was okay for her to ask for assistance and request an extension.

City Manager Traynham stated the process was quite tedious. Her biggest concern and the need for a consultant is for accuracy and to help facilitate the mapping changes and provide options. The consultant will work with the Redistricting Committee to come up with some options to recommend to City Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated it was still a tight timeframe from November to December. He asked if the Cape Fear COG was ready and available for the City. City Manager Traynham replied yes. He asked if there was a backup plan. She said not at this point. She has reached out to the local elections boards and nobody can seem to answer the questions because they were not around 20 years ago when a lot of these things happened. Everyone is learning on the go from the Census Bureau down.

Mayor Doughtie asked City Manager Traynham to keep them posted on that and to notify the committee members as soon as possible.

### **HOME Consortium Program**

City Manager Traynham said she and Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee learned about his program back in September during the HCIA meeting in Hobgood. She said the HOME Consortium Program is a funding agency that will help improve and provide affordable housing. It is still in the application phases. The individual governments do not directly receive the money. In this case, the consortium would be set up with the five counties involved and then the City would be eligible to set up for the non-urban category for funding. This program has been around since 1992 and is intended for the affordable housing program for low to moderate income needs.

She reported Halifax County has taken the lead as the applicant. She brings this to City Council because as part of the program, municipalities that want to participate need to pass a resolution. The resolution would be presented to City Council at the next meeting on November 16, 2021. This does not obligate the City to any funds. The maximum award amount is about \$750,000. They have a formula so the maximum the 5-county consortium could get would be \$657,000 annually. Once they go through the application

process which is led by Halifax County, the first thing they would need to do is to create a five-year plan. It would be an assessment to determine the housing needs.

City Manager Traynham stated the program has been very successful in the City of Greenville in restoring older homes and building apartment buildings. Halifax County is intending to apply for the program in the next few months. It would be 2022-2023 before the program would get active on site. It is intended to improve housing and housing is one of the City's significant needs. The City also has high populations low to moderate income. It also works in conjunction with the Community Redevelopment efforts. This program is also in partnership with the State Employees Credit Union so the administrative costs would likely be funded through the SECU.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if City Manager Traynham was wanting to know if the City would want to participate. She replied yes because she would like to present a resolution for City Council's consideration and approval. He believed they should participate in the program.

Mayor Doughtie stated he would like to know a little more about it and asked if it was similar to the CDBG money. City Manager Traynham said they were similar. Both come from federal sources and it is like the CDBG Scattered Site Housing. The money is awarded to the consortium and they will not fund individual cities or counties. They want the partnership to create a regional effort. This is a five year program so the first year is the development of the action plan to have a document to follow. This plan will prioritize spending and identifying projects.

Councilman Smith asked if it required any matching funds. City Manager Traynham said she had not seen any at this point. She did ask for clarification because there is not a commitment for City funds just by passing the resolution. The resolution supports the attempt to apply. She could try to get more information from Christina Wells with Halifax County before they would consider the resolution at the next meeting.

### **Miscellaneous**

City Manager Traynham reminded City Council that next Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup> the City will be closed in observance of Veterans Day.

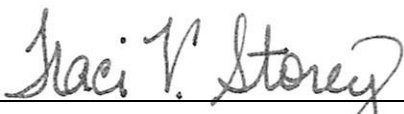
### **Closed Session**

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

*Minute Book Pages 20592 - 20597 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.*

City Council returned to Open Session.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

  
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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: 11/16/2021**