



# 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, March 29, 2022 at 8:30 a.m.** at City Hall in the First Floor Conference Room.

**Present:** Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

Carl Ferebee)

Sandra Bryant)

Suetta Scarbrough)

Wayne Smith)

Rex Stainback)

## **Council Members**

Kelly Traynham, City Manager

Traci Storey, City Clerk

Bobby Martin, Police Chief

Tammy Fahey, Interim Finance Director

Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director

The meeting was called to order.

## **Police Department**

Police Chief Martin presented a 2022 Budget Workbook (On file in Clerk's Office). He began by reviewing his equipment assessment (Section 1) for the Police Department. The three biggest capital items are radios, patrol vehicles, in-car cameras.

He put together a cost sheet on the VIPER radios (Kenwood). He priced the Dodge Durango which they already have and the Ford Explorer. He noted that vendors for the patrol vehicles have advised the Dodge Durango is having mechanical issues with its transmission and they will not be available until late 2023. The Ford Explorer is available and is cheaper on State contract. He has also requested in-car cameras which are approximately \$7,000 each with installation. This allows for both the body camera and in-car cameras come on as soon as patrol car light come on.

Chief Martin reported they were continuing to have problems with older patrol vehicles. The newer vehicles (2018-now) have saved them tremendously in

maintenance costs.

**VIPER Radios – Section 5 in Workbook**

To date they have spent \$117,545.90 on their existing radio system. The system has been operable and the guys have done a good job keeping it up. They are at a point now, where there are certain parts of town where they cannot hear officers. That is a safety issue. The proposed radios have GPS so they will know where officers are all the time. It also has a man-down button.

Chief Martin reported he spoke with Buddy Wrenn about questions concerning whether or not there would be fees associated with the radios. They also spoke with Mike Hodgeson who is the VIPER Systems Manager for the NC Highway Patrol and he told them the State was fully funding the VIPER radio system. If it breaks down they send someone to fix it. The City has to maintain the radios in the vehicles.

He stated the biggest costs is the purchase of the radios. Total cost to purchase 50 mobiles and 50 portables with extended warranty: \$282,342 plus \$145 programming fee. Total cost without extended warranty: \$264,842 plus \$145 programming fee. Purchasing 50 will give the department 6 spares. He said Mr. Wrenn also told him there were at least 234 towers right now. He referred to the PowerPoint presentation that was presented to the County in the back of the workbook showing a map of the tower coverage. He stated the main reason for VIPER radios is officer safety.

Councilman Smith asked when the VIPER radios were going into effect. Chief Martin replied according to Buddy Wrenn, they are going for May 2022.

Chief Martin stated they were looking at dual band radios so they could still communicate with Public Works. If they completely converted to VIPER they would be strictly emergency management and first responders. Public Works helps the department when there are major wrecks and they need streets to be blocked off. Many times they communicate via cell phone.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the department had in car cameras now. Chief Martin replied they did not. They did have some vehicles with them at one time, but they were with the VHS system and are outdated. He was trying to get into compliance with Senate Bill 300. That is the reform bill in reference to law enforcement and transparency.

City Council discussed officers using their personal cell phones to conduct business and whether the City should compensate them for using them or the City

supply them a cell phone. City Manager Traynham made note to get quotes for supplying work cell phones to officers who do not have them. This could be an added benefit.

### **Vehicles**

Chief Martin said he was requesting eight (8) vehicles this year. That helps them rotate out 8 vehicles that aren't going to make it. He reviewed the Vehicle Maintenance cost sheet in Section 6. He reported they have spent a total of \$351,000 throughout the lifetime of each vehicle. He called attention to the 2019-2021 vehicles where the maintenance was far less.

He spoke with Bill White of White Motors as well as Capital Ford, Lee Chrysler in Wilson and others about Dodge Durangos. With the mechanical issues they were having with the 2023s, he quoted a price for the Ford Explorer and found it is cheaper under State contract. The total costs for 8 Dodge Durangos was \$343,771.60 while 8 Ford Explorers was quoted for \$33,661.12. The department is behind in vehicle purchases and are running out of vehicles. He referred to photos of some of the vehicles and the condition of them. He mentioned the Dodge Chargers have not been a good car; they are constantly in the shop. He stressed the need for newer vehicles to keep the maintenance costs down.

Chief Martin said he will bring back more detailed quotes for the vehicles. When he found out about the delay in the Dodge Durango, he investigated the Ford Explorer; it has been a reliable vehicle.

### **In-Car Cameras**

Chief Martin stated they updated their body cameras and went with Kustom Signals. They have been thrilled with the quality of service they have received and with the quality of the video they get. The one thing they are missing is the officer has to manually turn the camera on. They have a policy where anytime an officer has an interaction with a citizen the body camera must be on. They have worked hard to be in compliance with the Department of Justice and their recommendations. They implemented a program at the first of the year where they can track all their use of forces. It is online and automated. The body camera footage is reviewed by four people: Captain Williams, Captain Moseley, Captain Hardy and then himself. He believes putting in-car cameras back into their patrol cars would be a big statement to the community that they are about transparency. It will be all around security for everyone. He suggests starting by installing the cameras in the new vehicles. Total cost: \$55,888.

### **Unfreezing Positions**

Chief Martin requested unfreezing all positions at the Police Department. He stated the officers have been the best recruiters. He said the officers who transferred from other departments have said they heard how the department was growing and the opportunity for training helped draw them here. He believes the training will draw quality officers here and keep them. The department is also working on a recruiting video.

Costs for unfreezing positions: Detective position salary including benefits total \$59,722 and 2 PACE Team officers total salaries including benefits totals \$110,681.

Chief Martin reported they applied for the COPS grant and were approved. They have been awarded \$110,000. That will cover \$35,000-36,000 of a salary for 3 years.

He said they have also applied for another grant for equipment to replenish older equipment. They also recently purchased 20 laptops using different funds so they did not have to come to City Council for that.

Councilman Smith stated it will depend on the projected revenues whether they could unfreeze the positions.

City Manager Traynham agreed and said they should hear from the State on revenue estimates the first part of the April. She wanted City Council to hear all the needs prior to receiving revenue estimates. She would like City Council to give her some direction of their priorities after these work sessions where she and finance will work on a balanced budget.

Chief Martin reviewed the operating budget work sheet for the department.

He requested an increases in the following:

- Salaries - increase the starting salary and to help officers across the board.
- Overtime – they have already gone through what they budgeted last year. Mainly because of shortages.
- On-Call Pay – They had to implement an on-call officer again. That compensates them for 4 hours.
- Telephone/Postage – increased because cost went up and they send a lot of certified mail.

- Cell Phones – minimum of 28 for officers who do not have City work cell phones.
- Fuel – doubled due to increase in cost.
- Tires – mainly for some of Crown Vic vehicles.
- Ammunition-used for qualifying and training.
- Soft Body Armor – asking for an additional \$5,000. Vests have gone up from \$700 to \$1,000 each. They need 10. Applied and awarded bulletproof vest grant so that will help. Vests are fitted to the specific officer.

City Council discussed how funds are transferred from one budget line to another within a department.

Councilman Smith confirmed with Chief Martin that it appears to be a \$200,000 increase in his expenditures from last year, not including capital outlay.

Chief Martin recommends City Council consider Scenario 4 regarding salaries under Section 7 in the Workbook.

City Council would like staff to work out the details on the salaries and bring back to them. City Manager Traynham stated she would have a progress report at the April 5<sup>th</sup> Work Session.

Break.

## **Human Resources Department**

Human Resources Director Caudle presented a memorandum with her two capital budget requests. She stated one was specific to Human Resources while the other is the software that could impact them citywide, so it hits all departments. She also enclosed her operating budget in their materials and printouts of the software products with pricing. She will also be playing a few videos demonstrating the software products, but encouraged them to review the materials and go to the websites. She added they could always schedule demos of the software if they wanted see more interworking of the software.

### **Citywide Software Project**

She said they have talked a lot about the need for modernization across all departments especially since COVID. Some may need it more than others, but they all could benefit from it.

She reported in the private world she did a lot of this type of thing, hence the reason former City Manager Scherer asked her to do the Zoom meetings. This experience enables her to easily look at and access these types of products and what will or will not work for the City.

She stated software as a service is often referred to as a SaaS product. It has been around for a while and is cloud-based. This is where most softwares are going. She has spent weeks of time over the past four months demoing all kinds of products that were built for the public sector. She has brought pricing for two companies: NeoGov and OpenGov that she believes fits the City best. She stated if they decide to move forward with this, they will need to put out a formal request for proposals. She said NeoGov was an intelligent HR software and OpenGov fits everything else such as financial and citizen services (permitting processes). They are both completely cloud-based public sector companies. They are also preferred partners so they talk to one another. For example, if they chose to move forward with both, everything from NeoGov (time/attendance and payroll) would speak to OpenGov for financial. This means they would not have to go from one system to another.

She explained the OpenGov product. It is basically automated interactions and digital integration of anything a citizen would need from the City. Things such as permitting, leasing the park for an event or report a pot hole to Public Works. All will be web based so whether someone is looking at it from a desktop computer, laptop or your cell phone, it will look the same. Anyone who has access to this type of technology can complete the forms. If they do not have access to a smart device or computer, she recommends spending about \$15,000 to make sure this type of thing is accessible for all people. Meaning they would have tablets in the lobby to help them complete the online forms, if needed. She believes if the City was going to spend the money on this, they should not have a paper version of everything; they need to integrate themselves completely. OpenGov also does budget planning, reporting and transparency, procurement; they have a complete financial suite. This would help with some of the limitations they have now when it comes to budgeting and forecasting.

Human Resources Director Caudle said the City currently has a product by Harris called SmartFusion. It does not do anything they need it to do in any department. The City pays \$30,000 per year for this product. She feels it makes the City less efficient using this product. Also, they have to buy it by the license meaning she can only use the product on her computer in her office. She cannot put it on her laptop.

She gave an example of the amount of paperwork she had on a new employee and how the same amount of paperwork will be in payroll and the department where employee is working. Plus not knowing where the paperwork may be in passing the forms from department to department to be completed is an issue.

She played a video giving an overview of OpenGov.

She referred to the cost estimate page of the memorandum. It would be a 3-year software subscription. Year 1 would be a subscription fee plus any training and implementation costs. The first year cost is very high; \$90,000 annual fee but then they were looking at approximately \$300,000 for implementation and training. The implementation would include getting the City set up but also helping to integrate all of the paper products and information out of SmartFusion. After that it is \$90,000 collectively for all of those products. She recommends the full OpenGov ERP to fully modernize all departments. She noted OpenGov does not do any HR so if they did the full ERP project for OpenGov and the full ERP project NeoGov, the year one cost collectively would be about \$510,000. (\$390,000 for OpenGov & \$110,408 for NeoGov). Then \$160,000 per year after the initial year cost.

City Council discussed different scenarios if they did not go with both of the full software products.

Human Resources Director Caudle reported currently the City owns NeoGov Insight which basically recruits employees. It also screens them and Governmentjobs.com is part of that. It is like the public sector version of Indeed. This gives the City a very unbiased, automated and digital process to recruit an employee. But now once they hire them, they go back to “dinosaur” processes. If they added Onboard, then basically once they hire a new employee to the first day they walk into the building, it would be very modernized. If they went with a full NeoGov project, all the SmartFusion products would go through NeoGov, not SmartFusion.

Councilman Smith asked if there was in-house training. Human Resources Director Caudle replied it depends on the product. There are some, such as core HR where people would be here helping with some of the paper; most is virtual. Her experience with NeoGov Insight has been a once a week virtual consultation for a couple of hours. She leaves with homework assignments and they leave with homework assignments. Then the next week if all was completed, they move on to the next set of tasks. There is ownership on both the employee and the software company to implement the product.

City Manager Traynham stated she has brought this up in the past but it has never gotten past the Finance Director and City Manager's office for the Planning Department. It is not a matter of if they do this, they are going to have to do this at some point. They have had SmartFusion for the past 10 years and all these products are getting outdated and beginning to cause a lot of room for error.

Human Resources Director Caudle reported neighboring cities and counties are already on NeoGov and OpenGov. At some point when the City is trying to recruit new employees that have been working off of systems like this, it will be hard to integrate them into the City's current system. Councilman Smith added people are not going to want to do paperwork anymore.

They discussed how this software will help employees be accountable for themselves and the benefit for them to have access to their employment information digitally (tax records, certification information, vacation/sick leave, evaluations etc.). It will also help HR to be more efficient and have access to work remotely.

Councilman Smith asked about the security of the software. Human Resources Director Caudle replied cloud-based software houses everything and is in multiple locations. There are backups constantly running. On the current system, they have one server which is their backup and if that server went down they would have no backups.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the contract. Human Resources Director Caudle replied they typically require 3-year contracts.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if one of the towns that are currently using this software would be open to some of City Council making a site visit to see how it works. Human Resources Director Caudle replied she could ask them. She reported she has had great conversations with Elizabeth City's Main Street Director about citizen services as well as their HR Director about NeoGov. The Main Street Director was the one who made her realize that providing the digital access for all people was important because they did not think through that piece. They had a paper version of everything and found that was not efficient.

City Manager Traynham encouraged City Council members to go to these government websites to see what they could do as a person online that they could not do on the City's website.

Human Resources Director Caudle played a video highlighting customer services.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee suggested putting in the contract that they have someone in-house for at least a week after the go live date.

Human Resources Director Caudle explained that although NeoGov was Human Resources specific however, the HR department supports all employees and retirees. It would support approximately 250 people.

She played a video about NeoGov.

She explained NeoGov supports an employee from recruitment to retirement. They currently have Insight (under contract for 3 years) and the next piece would be Onboard. Once you hire someone, all the required information to get them to an active employee in the system would be done through this module. Currently, for onboarding an employee, it takes 6 people to process, 64 pieces of paper and about 20 labor hours which is all done before they even see an employee. Sometimes, it could be up to a week before they can meet with them to do the official onboarding. With the new software, the employee would do everything online.

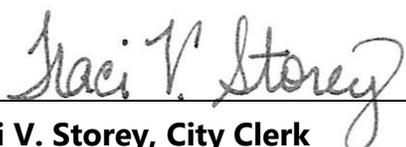
Human Resources Director Caudle played another video for Onboard.

Councilwoman Bryant excused herself from the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

City Council expressed concern about employees starting work before all the onboarding was completed. They discussed how this issue needed to be changed.

City Manager Traynham stated they were working on changing many of these problem issues that they were discovering. She has required all department heads to participate in an employment law class coming up the end of April because there has been no formal training in place. It is staff's responsibility to be administrators of the City. That is why they come to them with requests and resources they need in order to do their jobs correctly. If they improve their efficiencies, they would have more time to do more specific trainings.

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

  
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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: April 19, 2022**