



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, January 3, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem
Sandra W. Bryant)
Tommy Daughtry)
Wayne Smith)
Rex Stainback)

Council Members

Kelly Traynham, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director
Bobby Martin, Police Chief
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Davis Wise, Planning & Development Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

Absent: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director
Tony Hall, Main Street Development Director

In Mayor Doughtie’s absence, Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee presided. He called the meeting to order and opened with an invocation.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he understood the Closed Session needed to be removed from the agenda.

Renewal of Inter-Jurisdictional Agreement with the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District

City Manager Traynham stated this item would be on the January 17, 2023 meeting agenda for City Council to consider for action, but she wanted to bring it before them this evening for review and give them the opportunity to ask questions. She said every five years the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District (RRSD) requests the City of Roanoke Rapids enters into an agreement concerning the wastewater collection system. The primary purpose of the agreement is a communication tool where the City gives notification to the RRSD of new customers, primarily commercial and industrial. This is a way for the RRSD to know what is coming so they can appropriately access the impact fees and/or rates.

She has compared the 2022 dated agreement to the one from 2017 and there has been some acronyms added that support the public water system, some definitions clarified, the addition to a general statute reference and removal of a couple of minor words. Otherwise, the document has remained unchanged, even from the 2012 agreement. The agreement has been reviewed by Attorney Davis as well.

Councilman Smith asked if there was separate agreement concerning when the RRSB makes road cuts. City Manager Traynham replied yes, that was a separate agreement.

NCLM 2023-2024 Legislative Biennium Goals and Voting Delegate

City Manager Traynham said the NC League of Municipalities have developed sixteen (16) potential advocacy goals for the legislature for the 2023-2024 legislative biennium that begins in January at the NC General Assembly. According to the City's records Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee is the City's voting delegate of record. Before the end of the week he should be receiving an email where he will have the opportunity to select ten out of the sixteen proposed goals.

She stated in addition to sending the goals in an email a couple of weeks ago, they are also enclosed in their agenda packets where she numbered them and highlighted a few she felt would be beneficial. She wanted to give City Council the opportunity to discuss the goals and communicate with Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee. The vote has to be done online by January 13, 2023.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said City Manager Traynham has highlighted seven of the ten. He believes the seven she highlighted were good ones. He would like City Council to follow up the other three they want to add with City Manager Traynham by next Tuesday.

Inter-Jurisdictional Agreements for Inspection Services

City Manager Traynham stated the 2009 agreement that is enclosed in their agenda packets is the agreement currently upheld with Halifax County for the provision of inspection services. Initially when these agreements were developed it was the intent to primarily use it for staff absences or special projects. She stressed the City wants to be a good neighbor to the County because inspection services facilitate economic development and necessary for construction progress projects. She reported the City has two (2) certified inspectors/code enforcement officials. Brian Duhadaway has been with the City for a number of years and only has a few years until retirement. He has all his Level III certifications which is the highest one can obtain and he has the highest certification in the entire county. He has done the plan reviews and all the inspections for Klausner which is now Binderholz, the new sawmill Roseburg and Lakeland Arts Center. There are also some new schools coming up.

She said this has been an ongoing thing; it has become more routine. It started as one day a week, then two days a week. They have tried to conduct some discussions with County staff and now the Town of Weldon's long-time code enforcement officer, Richard Brown has passed away. Therefore, the Town of Weldon doesn't have an inspector right now. This has created a significant demand on the City's inspections staff. She said they feel the inspections agreement needs to be modified. She is currently looking into a few different versions rather than just increasing some of the fees. She is looking at some different structures as well. She has communicated with both the County and Weldon that the City cannot be the only backup plan for a number of reasons. City staff has concerns about liabilities and the State has changed its administrative code for state inspectors that requires building inspectors complete an inspection within two (2) business days of the request. This has put a lot of demands on them. There is an option for a contractor to go online and file a complaint with the State's Code Officials Qualification Board. If the State Inspector has to come out and do the inspection for the jurisdiction, the fees have to be relinquished by the city or town to the State to help with that. Permits fees are part of the revenue generation of the Planning Department.

City Manager Traynham stated they wanted to bring this to the City Council's attention because they want to be a good neighbor and facilitate things. At the present time they would need to hire at least one, but likely two more staff members to cover the workloads being asked of staff. She reported this is not just a local problem, this is a regional problem with trying to find qualified personnel.

She said these inspectors are personally certified through the NC Code Officials Qualification Board so these are not the City's certifications, these are personal certifications. Therefore, the liability falls independently on each of those employees. Over the years they have tried to work something out, but nothing has really changed. They feel if they change the agreement it would be a good way to get something else going to help everyone out and further the progress and economic development in the city and county.

Councilman Smith asked if the City's inspectors were putting city work back so they could inspect in the county. City Manager Traynham replied staff makes an effort to prioritize City projects first, but sometimes it is a challenge with the bigger projects. There are some limited options. She reported Weldon does not have anyone in place right now so they have been calling City staff to ask how to process a permit and other things. The Town of Weldon desires an agreement with the City. She has spoken with their Town Administrator to ask even if they had an agreement on paper, what kind of burden does that put on City inspectors and would the City get their permit fees. There is a lot to look at here.

Councilman Smith stated he has looked at the fees on the current agreement and there is no way the City is breaking even. City Manager Traynham agreed and replied they were

not even close to breaking even. Councilman Smith said if they get into a mutual agreement, the City needs to increase the rates to at least break even and possibly make a little money.

City Manager Traynham said her concern was they were talking about human resources and people, not a piece of equipment you rent out. She is concerned about exhaustion of staff and potential mistakes that could be made. Every five years the department goes through an ISO rating and review. For example, in the month of October 2022, the City inspectors did almost 200 inspections. There was just about 100 for the City alone which is significantly high since they typically average 70 per month. They did over 80 inspections for the County that month. She commends staff, especially Brian Duhadaway for his efforts. He knows there is a job that needs to be done, but there also comes a lot of responsibility with it.

She added the State keeps imposing stricter requirements to try to speed things along. The manpower is not meeting the demand. The solution being the County and Town of Weldon try to recruit employees is not happening very quickly. Over the years, the City had to advertise for a building inspector a few times. She understands that it is difficult to find qualified help.

Councilman Smith stated what was going to happen is when Mr. Duhadaway's retirement date comes up, he is going to retire because he is over worked. The City could lose somebody because they are trying to satisfy everyone else.

City Manager Traynham explained they were working to develop professionally built staff in order to have a succession plan in place. Even with two inspectors, the need is still very great.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated it was a concern in itself to not have any other Level III inspectors in the county. Not only because of when Mr. Duhadaway retires, but what if he were to get sick.

Planning & Development Director Wise reported they did have a transition plan. Marvin Wheeler who came from Halifax County is working on his Level II's right now and once that is complete will go for his Level III. That is a transition for Mr. Duhadaway when his retires. Minimum Housing Code Enforcement Officer, Roger Bell is working on his Level I and has obtained one certificate already.

City Manager Traynham added there is minimum required of experience and time in years for these certifications. They usually make you wait two years in between levels. The succession plan is still four to five years out. Her concern was City staff was going through

a lot; its manpower, resources, vehicles and the potential for any lawsuits. She stated as the agreement stands now, if the County or Weldon were involved in a lawsuit on one of their projects, she understands the City would be responsible for all that. She believes there are better options or agreements out there. This is not something that will get resolved in one conversation. She suggested possibly speaking with the HCIA about the need and that the City wants to help out as best they can.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said before that, maybe the City and County need to sit down and talk and include Weldon as well to come up with something.

Attorney Davis said the core of the issue right now is the current local inter-jurisdictional agreement and what they were going to do about that. He and City Manager Traynham have talked about it and they wanted to bring it before City Council to make them aware because it does involve the other governmental entities in Halifax County. The current agreement does not adequately compensate the City for the amount of time and resources, especially at the level the City is being relied on at this point. This is what they were looking at addressing. They were trying to formulate some way for the City to be compensated more fairly. They do not have that yet, but the purpose tonight was to bring it before City Council so they could understand it as well as start these discussions with the County. The economic development in Halifax County outside of Roanoke Rapids does have some benefit to the City. The focus does need to be that the City is being adequately compensated given the amount of exposure and the risks they are running.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee confirmed that the City Manager and City Attorney were going to work on this and bring back to them.

Councilman Daughtry asked if the City was helping Weldon right now. City Manager Traynham replied yes, to a limited extent. They have a new Town Administrator and they've had a few conversations. They want assistance with everything and said all they need was a contract in place. She said even with a contract in place, they cannot keep pouring from an empty cup. The City has offered to let their staff come and observe its staff, but the City cannot do all their planning, zoning and code enforcement work. Another issue is the salary Weldon has to pay someone. The City can't solve all of Weldon's problems. She suggested one option was for Weldon to dissolve their inspections and have the County do all of them. She reiterated that the City wants to be a good neighbor and wants to see things happen.

Pedestrian Feasibility Study Grant Application

Planning & Development Director Wise reported a resolution would be coming forward for their consideration of a feasibility study for sidewalks which is a joint grant application with the Peanut Belt RPO. The project focus would be in the Historic District. There are

many areas where there are no sidewalks so people are walking in the street as well as wheelchair use in the street. There is no cash match required, but there can be a match to be more competitive. He was not including a cash match because he knows the City's financial situation; hopefully the City will be awarded the grant without it. Some of the priorities of the study will be to determine the priority locations for sidewalks, installation and repair. Again, the focus is in the Historic District and utilizing information from the City's current Pedestrian Plan adopted in 2011 which is severely outdated. The study will accelerate and create a specific implementation plan for projects identified in the 2011 document. It will also use data from the NCDOT Environmental Justice and Transportation Disadvantage Index Tool to show how the project will address transportation equity in the City's census tracts where there is a higher poverty rate.

He said a resolution will be presented to City Council for their consideration and approval at the next meeting. The grant application will be submitted January 12th. The City of Roanoke Rapids will be the applicant for the grant. The Peanut Belt RPO is assisting with the application and will provide support for the project if awarded.

Planning & Development Director Wise also reported there is a grant that reopens in January where they can update the City's pedestrian plan. There is a cash match for that grant. There is also another NCDOT grant application that would install handicap ramps at intersections. He stated the Historic District was his focus area because that is the core/heart of the community and it has the most distressed and disadvantaged uses in comparison to other parts of the community.

Councilman Smith asked how much was the grant. Planning & Development Director Wise replied \$60,000 which is the cost for the consultant. He added they could put a match to be more competitive with the application, but it is not required. He was not asking the City to put in a cash match in this application.

Miscellaneous

City Manager Traynham reminded City Council to let her know their ten NCLM legislative biennium goals by next Tuesday, January 10th so Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee can complete the online voting by January 13th.

She stated at the next regular meeting on January 17th, City Council will consider the following items:

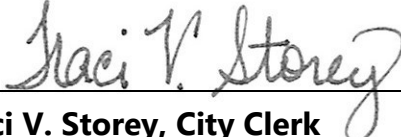
- Roanoke Rapids Sanitary Inter-Jurisdictional Agreement
- Pedestrian Feasibility Grant Application Resolution
- Surplus Items for GovDeals.com

Councilman Smith thanked all the department heads for everything they did in 2022 for the City. They did a great job. He asked they pass along to their employees that they too did an excellent job. He appreciates the efforts they put forward. He also thanked City Manager Traynham for what she did this past year as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee echoed Councilman Smith's comments. He added he believed 2023 was going to be a tough year so they need to continue to focus like they did last year. He looks forward to some good things in 2023.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: January 17, 2023