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**Roanoke Rapids City Council**

**August 18, 2014**

A special meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on the above date at 6:00 p.m. at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

 Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

 Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

 Ernest C. Bobbitt)

 Suetta S. Scarbrough)

 Carol H. Cowen)

 Wayne Smith)

 Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

 Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, NCCMC, City Clerk

 Andy Jackson, Interim Police Chief

 Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager

 MeLinda Hite, Finance Director

 Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

 John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

 Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief

 Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney

 Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director

 Christina Caudle, Main Street/Development Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with prayer.

Mayor Doughtie stated the purpose of this meeting is to conduct a public hearing to seek citizen input on installment financing that the City Council is considering.

City Manager Scherer explained that during the budget preparation process, he asked Department Heads to present their most critical capital needs. He stated based upon the input received, staff put together a list of vehicles that are in critical need of being replaced.

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City Manager Scherer stated we received a proposal from a local bank for installment financing for the purchase of these vehicles. He stated Department Heads will have an opportunity tonight to present their requests and Finance Director Hite will highlight the installment financing package.

A PowerPoint presentation was given with each Department Head highlighting their needs. Below are the departmental presentations and comments. *(A complete copy of the PowerPoint presentation, including photographs of the vehicles, is on file in the Clerk’s Office.)*

**Vehicles Requested by Department**

**Fire Street (Public Works)**

One (1) Ford F-250 4 x 4 F-150 4 x 4/Super Cab/Trailer Towing Package

One (1) Ford Expedition \*\*Two (2) F-150 @ $24,717.00 each

**Police Solid Waste (Public Works)**

Three (3) 2014 Dodge Chargers One (1) Rear Loading Refuse Collection Truck

Two (2) Program Dodge Chargers \*\*Piggy-back, Carolina Environmental Systems

Two (2) Toyota Camrys

 Lights/Emergency Equipment/Graphics **Property Maintenance (Public Works)**

 Installation of In-Car Cameras F-250 4 x 4/Utility Body/Trailer Towing Package

 Lights/Emergency Equipment Truck would be used for HVAC/Electrical/Plumbing and

 equipped for such.

**Parks & Recreation**

One (1) F-250 Crew Cab

One (1) F-150 4 x 4 Super Cab

**Fire Chief Coggins** presented the following:

**Fire Department Vehicles That Need Replacing**

**2000 Ford Crown Vic (Mileage: 105,241)**

* Vehicle was given to Fire Department as a surplus vehicle from the Police Department
* A/C does not work

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* Driver side rear window will not roll up
* Interior shows major wear
* Current repairs include a fuel pump and coil packs, fuel mileage is still poor
* Emergency lighting package does not meet current standards for response

**1996 GMC Yukon (Mileage: 184,580)**

* Vehicle was donated by Dominion Power with 110,000 miles
* Currently out of service due to hole in the radiator
* A/C does not work
* Front suspension needs major repairs due to worn tie-rod ends and ball joints
* Interior shows major wear with several broken parts (door handles, knobs)
* Emergency lighting package does not meet current standards for response

Councilman Bobbitt asked Chief Coggins if this is the first time he has asked for a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Chief Coggins stated yes. He stated every vehicle they have was donated by the Police Department or Dominion Power.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about the need for a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Chief Coggins stated this would be a dual purpose vehicle for the Assistant Chief. He stated this vehicle would carry the turn-out gear and would also be used to respond to areas where a four-wheel drive vehicle is needed.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if the vehicle would be used for first responder calls.

Chief Coggins stated only if it is needed.

Councilman Bobbitt asked which response locations would require a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Chief Coggins stated the Canal Trail. He stated there are also several places they need to go to with the brush truck.

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Councilman Bobbitt asked Chief Coggins how many calls they get for the Canal Trail.

Chief Coggins stated very few.

Councilman Smith questioned why the Fire Department would be responding when that area is the responsibility of the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad.

Chief Coggins stated that is correct but they would respond if requested. He asked that Council keep in mind that we do, on occasion, have snow.

Mayor Doughtie asked the price difference between the F-250 and F-150. He stated the Street Department is requesting a four-wheel drive vehicle that is an F-150.

Chief Coggins stated they could take a look at that but they haul around very heavy hoses.

Councilman Bobbitt asked Chief Coggins if they have had good service from the Yukon.

Chief Coggins stated yes.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if they looked at the possibility of another Yukon.

Finance Director Hite stated we looked at the vehicles available through State contract.

**Interim Police Chief Jackson** presented the following:

**Police Department Vehicles That Need Replacing**

**2003 Ford Expedition (Mileage: 142,735) Vehicle P-126**

* Bad throttle body
* Replaced EGR gasket
* Bad crank sensor
* Uses oil
* Oil leaks under #4 spark plug

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* Replaced starter
* Bullet hole in hood

**2004 Dodge Durango (Mileage: 115,000) Vehicle P-127**

* Interior panels are coming apart
* Replaced fuel pump
* Catalytic converter bad on right side

**2006 Crown Vic (Mileage: 124,278) Vehicle P-120**

* License #77016-T
* Seats have lost all support/hole in driver’s seat
* Suspension is worn
* Body striping is in poor repair
* Driver’s side interior door panel falling apart

**2007 Crown Vic (Mileage: 86,885) Vehicle P-124**

* License #77293-T
* Seats have lost all support
* Suspension is worn
* Striping on vehicle is in poor shape
* Interior door panel falling apart
* Battery light comes on
* Electrical issues

**2006 Crown Vic (Mileage: High) Vehicle P-121**

* License #77017-T
* Odometer not working (last reading: 97,000)
* Seats have lost all support
* Body and striping in poor shape
* Hole in driver’s seat
* Uses oil
* Idles rough
* Engine light comes on

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**2007 Dodge Charger (Vehicle P-15)**

* Engine and transmission problems
* Suspension is in very bad shape
* Transmission needs replacing

**2007 Dodge Charger (Vehicle P-17)**

* Engine blown

Chief Jackson explained that they are requesting five Dodge Chargers, three of which are under State contract. He stated two of them are program cars at White Motors. He stated they are also requesting two Toyota Camrys which are more economical, have a good warranty and have lower maintenance needs. He stated the Camrys will be used by the Detective Division to replace the 2003 Expedition and the 2004 Durango which were drug seizure vehicles. He stated these would be non-pursuit vehicles.

Chief Jackson stated the wear and tear on the seats of the vehicles is due to the utility belts worn by the officers. He stated the wear and tear on the vehicles is also contributed to the excessive mileage. He stated these vehicles run 12-hour shifts. He stated now that we no longer have a Magistrate after 8:00 p.m., our officers have to travel back and forth to Halifax when they make an arrest. He stated because these Magistrates sometimes serve as Judges during the day, the officers may have to make trips to Halifax during the day. Chief Jackson stated a rod came through the engine of the 2007 Dodge Charger and it is being used by HCC for educational purposes.

Councilman Smith, referencing the photos of the Crown Vics, asked why the department let these vehicles get in such bad shape. He stated no one would let their personal vehicle get like that.

Chief Jackson stated each vehicle goes through an inspection once a month but when they are carried to the shop for maintenance, the door panels have to be removed. He stated the holes in the seats are from the gear on the belts and there is not a lot they can do about that.

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Councilman Smith asked if the five spare cars are being run up and down the road with flowers on them.

Chief Jackson explained that these vehicles are spare cars. He stated an officer used one today because his vehicle was broken down.

Councilman Smith stated it was his understanding that the transmission was taken out of one of the 2007 Chargers and put into another vehicle.

Chief Jackson stated that is correct. He stated it was taken out of a vehicle with a higher mileage and put into a vehicle with 50,000 miles.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for an estimate of what we could possibly get if these vehicles were sold as surplus property.

Public Works Director Chalker stated we have been getting more by selling through Gov.Deals. He stated the two Dodge Chargers would bring at least twice as much as the Crown Vics, between $8,000 and $10,000 total. He explained that the Dodge Chargers have a lot of different computer systems in them and the salvage yards will typically purchase them.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if we could get more cars through State contract.

Chief Jackson indicated that the State purchased 10 extra and we have asked them to hold us 3 until City Council makes a final decision.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about the Dodge Charger program cars.

Chief Jackson stated both of them are new and only used as demo models for other Police Departments. He stated they have more equipment than what we put in our cars. He stated they are fully equipped with the exception of radios. Chief Jackson stated they have bumper guards on the front, LED spotlights on each side and extra light markers on the side. He stated this is especially needed when working I-95 at night.

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Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the mileage of these two vehicles.

Chief Jackson stated one has 400 miles and one has 1,200 miles. He stated the Dodge Chargers under State contract, which are brand new, cost $22,785 but they have no equipment on them. He stated the estimated cost to equip each car is around $9,500.

Mayor Doughtie asked if there is any opportunity to get more program cars.

Chief Jackson stated Mr. White is still checking on this for us.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the program cars have a full warranty.

Chief Jackson stated yes.

Councilman Smith asked about the vehicles for $22,000.

Chief Jackson stated the equipment breakdown on the State contract is not as elaborate as what is on the program cars.

Councilman Smith stated every time you have something extra, that is just something else to break.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about insurance and warranty coverage on the Camrys since they are civilian vehicles.

Chief Jackson stated they are covered.

Mayor Doughtie stated, in reference to Councilman Smith’s earlier comment about not using vehicles, that the department has 30 some aging vehicles and there will always be two or three that have issues. He stated the department is not using every car every day.

Chief Jackson explained that each squad is assigned a spare car and the squad is responsible for inspecting that vehicle.

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Councilman Bobbitt asked if they would have a policy about pushing cars if the department is able to get the two cars with the bumper guards.

Chief Jackson stated they will not be pushing cars.

Public Works Director Chalker explained that all vehicles have a crumple zone which results in a tremendous amount of damage from fender benders.

Chief Jackson stated he realizes the budget is tight but they would not be asking for these vehicles if they were not needed.

After apologizing for having to make his presentation seated due to a herniated disc, **Parks & Recreation Director Simeon** presented the following:

**Parks & Recreation Department Vehicles That Need Replacing**

**1999 Dodge Ram Pickup (Mileage: 132,029) Vehicle #610**

* A/C does not work
* Brakes need constant repair
* Interior/Dash/Radio damaged from being broken into
* Back door does not open on driver’s side
* Transmission slips when pulling load
* Gets 3 - 5 miles per gallon
* Uses multiple quarts of oil weekly - one cylinder dead
* Rusted out
* Half size seat has to haul 3 inmates

**1995 Nissan Pickup (Mileage: 75,500) Vehicle #625**

* Manual transmission needs major work
* Uses oil weekly
* No A/C or heat
* Electrical shortages
* In constant need of repairs
* Not strong enough to pull trailer when needed

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* 19 years old

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon pointed out a mistake on the slide showing the requested vehicles for his department. He stated the F-250 Crew Cab should be an F-150 Crew Cab. He stated these vehicles are needed to haul trailers and mowers. He stated they have spent over $8,000 on vehicle repairs to the 1999 Dodge Ram.

Councilman Smith asked if we could use the Police Department’s vehicles that are stored at the Public Works Department.

Public Works Director Chalker stated when those vehicles were received by us from the Federal Government, they were restricted to Police use only. He stated we had to sign a contract to that effect.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the 1995 Nissan was a hand-me-down.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated it was purchased used about 10 years ago.

Councilman Bobbitt stated the 1995 Nissan has 75,500 miles.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated yes. He stated the vehicle is mainly used in town, going from building to building all day. He stated 75,500 miles does not sound like a lot but it is a 20-year old vehicle.

**Public Works Director Chalker** presented the following:

**Public Works Department Vehicles That Need Replacing**

**2000 Ford F-150 (Mileage: 190,410) Vehicle #210**

* Purchased from local used car lot, originated from Pennsylvania DOT
* Crank bearings worn out in motor
* Seat springs gone
* Undercarriage rusted

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**1998 Ford F-150 (Mileage: 177,904) Vehicle #500**

* Purchased from local used car lot, originated from Pennsylvania DOT
* Undercarriage rusted
* Seat worn out
* Runs rough
* Transmission leaks

**1995 Nissan Pickup (Mileage: Approx. 110,000) Vehicle #401**

* Odometer inoperative
* No center dash
* Converter stopped up
* Needs A/C work
* Shocks worn out
* Clutch & hydraulic issues

**2002 Sterling Trash Truck (Mileage: 73,936) Vehicle #351**

* Dash held on by duct tape
* Needs hopper door seal
* Fuel system leaks down, have to crank by using starting fluid
* Air brake system leaks
* Driver’s seat broken
* No front grill
* Blade shoes worn out
* Engine leaking oil
* Dumpers (at rear to dump cans) worn out

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that the last trash truck we purchased was an International, and we will possibly look at that brand again. He stated he personally does not like the Sterling. He stated we run trash trucks every day and have two spares. He stated it is surprising how many times both front line trucks go down during the same day. He stated we have spent $55,621 in maintenance since the purchase of the Sterling.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the cost of a trash truck.

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Public Works Director Chalker stated we were able to piggyback on another town’s bid and get one for $169,000.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if we are getting our money’s worth by purchasing used vehicles.

Public Works Director Chalker stated that is a difficult question to answer. He stated usually in purchasing a used vehicle, they never honor what they tell you. He stated we do have three

ASE certified mechanics that are quite capable.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if we have purchased any used vehicles from DOT.

Public Works Director Chalker stated we have purchased snow plows and sand/salt spreaders from DOT.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the requested F-250 would be used every day.

Public Works Director Chalker stated yes. He stated it would be the vehicle that they haul equipment and materials around to take care of the HVAC, electrical and plumbing work at City buildings.

Mayor Doughtie asked how much more an F-250 would cost if it was not on State contract.

Public Works Director Chalker stated around $10,000 to $13,000 more.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the warranty on a used vehicle.

Public Works Director Chalker stated if we went out and looked for a used vehicle, we would have to get it at a really good deal and we would still not have a warranty.

City Manager Scherer pointed out that if you purchase used vehicles and do not replace them within a reasonable amount of time, the maintenance costs start to go up exponentially.

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Councilman Bobbitt asked Public Works Director Chalker how many vehicles are in his department.

Public Works Director Chalker stated about 35. He stated they have been really good at patching up vehicles to keep them going.

Councilman Smith stated he is not trying to be hard on anyone but one of the easiest things to do is get in debt. He stated the City is already in big debt and that is what he is thinking about. He stated doing this installment financing would be an additional annual payment of $191,000. Councilman Smith asked how much more we can put on the citizens.

Councilman Bobbitt stated more things are being dumped on us by the State.

Public Works Director Chalker stated there is a new mandate to update signage to higher visibility signage. He stated his department does not have the time or money to do this but we are attempting to do a little to show the State that we are trying. He stated these newer signs cost three times as much as the traditional signs.

City Manager Scherer stated they started this program in Ohio before he left. He stated a $25 stop sign had to be replaced with a new reflective stop sign that cost about $90.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about a timeframe to get these signs updated.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he is not sure.

City Manager Scherer stated he anticipates the State pushing down more programs to our level.

**Finance Director Hite** presented the following information on the installment financing proposal:

* RFP sent out for installment financing for 15 vehicles
* Total amount to be financed: $558,495

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* First Citizens Bank came in with lowest bid of 1.4% fixed interest rate
* Term: 3 years
* Annual Payment: $191,401.78

Finance Director Hite pointed out that Southern Bank and PNC declined to bid as they were looking for longer term loans.

Councilman Smith asked what our total debt would be if we did this installment financing.

Finance Director Hite stated $2.2 million.

Councilman Smith asked what our yearly payment would be on the debt.

Finance Director Hite stated around $400,000 plus the theatre of $1.8 million.

Councilman Smith asked about the percentage of our Undesignated Fund Balance.

Finance Director Hite stated 26.9%.

Councilman Smith stated there is already $390,000 appropriated from Undesignated Fund Balance and we are talking about $600,000 for the vehicles. He asked about taking this amount out of Undesignated Fund Balance instead of putting the citizens in further debt. He asked Finance Director Hite what that would do to our Fund Balance.

Finance Director Hite stated it would drop to around 21.4%.

Councilman Smith asked how much we would be looking at spending if we had a major disaster.

Finance Director Hite stated $1.2 million.

Councilman Smith stated that would leave us with $3.5 million. He stated we have to keep two months’ worth of operating expenses.

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Finance Director Hite stated that is correct.

Councilman Smith asked how much that would be.

Finance Director Hite stated $2.5 million.

Councilman Smith pointed out that we would be broke.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many of our installment financing packages would be paid up within the next few years.

Finance Director Hite stated two, about $100,000.

**A public hearing having been advertised and proper notices having been given according to law, Mayor Doughtie opened the public hearing for comments.**

Mr. Allen Purser of 100 River Road North, Roanoke Rapids, NC stated he appreciates the Council holding this public hearing as a measure of transparency, and hates that there are not more citizens here. He stated we need to do business in the open.

Dr. James Ketoff, Chairman of the Library Advisory Committee, commented about the carpet at the Roanoke Rapids Public Library. He stated the carpeting was original to the construction and Council saw fit last year to replace half of the carpeting. He stated the remainder of the job was not approved in this year’s budget. Dr. Ketoff asked that Council complete the carpeting project at the Library.

**There being no one else to speak, Mayor Doughtie declared the public hearing closed.**

Mayor Doughtie stated he thought about how people must feel when trying to decide whether to run the A/C or put food on the table or purchase medicine. He stated that is what people do when they do not have enough money, and that is what this City Council has to deal with. He stated we have worked very diligently not to increase the tax burden on our citizens. Mayor Doughtie stated, as Chief Jackson mentioned earlier, that it is now catching up on us.

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Mayor Doughtie stated our problem is now a big problem and we do not have a community that can absorb a lot more payments or a tax increase. He stated we are trying to bring more businesses to our community and increasing taxes is not the way to do that. He stated we do not have all of the answers and were hoping to get more input from our citizens but that did not happen. Mayor Doughtie stated this City Council will be charged with making the decision on what to purchase.

Mayor Doughtie thanked everyone for their presentations.

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adjourn.

 

 9/2/14