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**Roanoke Rapids City Council**

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The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on the above date at 7:00 p.m. at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

 Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

 Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

 Suetta S. Scarbrough)

 Carol H. Cowen)

 Wayne Smith)

 Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

 Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney

 Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, NCCMC, City Clerk

 Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

 John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

 Andy Jackson, Interim Police Chief

 Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief

 Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director

 Christina Caudle, Main Street/Development Director

 Ernest C. Bobbitt, Council Member

 MeLinda Hite, Finance Director

 Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager

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

With no one indicating a conflict of interest with any of the items on the agenda, motion was made by ­­­­­­­­­­­Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for November 18, 2014 with an amendment to add, between Items 13 and 14, a closed session to discuss a personnel matter.

Fire Chief Coggins stated on June 30 Assistant Chief of Logistics Ricky Dickens retired with 30 years of service to the City of Roanoke Rapids and the citizens of Roanoke Rapids.

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Fire Chief Coggins stated Mr. Dickens’ service is greatly appreciated and will be remembered. He requested that the helmet and badge of Mr. Dickens be given to him in accordance with the following North Carolina General Statute:

§ 160A-294.1.  Honoring deceased or retiring firefighters.

**A fire department established by a municipality pursuant to this Article may, in the discretion of the governing body of the municipality, award to a retiring firefighter or a surviving relative of a decreased firefighter, upon request, the fire helmet of the deceased or retiring firefighter, at a price determined in a manner authorized by the governing body. The price may be less than the fair market value of the helmet. (2003-145, s.2.)**

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to award Retired Assistant Chief of Logistics Ricky Dickens his helmet and badge for and in consideration of the sum of $1.00 received as required by NCGS 160A-294.1.

Following additional remarks by Fire Chief Coggins and the payment of $1.00 by Chief Coggins, Retired Assistant Chief of Logistics Ricky Dickens was awarded his helmet and badge.

Fire Chief Coggins also indicated that Mr. Dickens would be receiving a beautiful retirement clock/plaque when it is ready.

Mayor Doughtie thanked Mr. Dickens for his service.

Mr. David Harvey, P. O. Box 1405, Roanoke Rapids, NC stated he is here tonight as President of the Halifax County Chapter of the NAACP to talk to City Council about the last meeting held with City officials and going forward. He stated he spoke to City Council a few months ago and also met with some of the Council members, the City Manager and City Attorney. He stated in that meeting, they talked about the hiring of a police chief and the culture of Roanoke Rapids. Mr. Harvey stated one of the things discussed in addition to the importance of hiring the right police chief was the importance of having inclusion.

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Mr. Harvey stated he listened to the City officials at the meeting and thought it was a pretty good meeting. He stated he thought everyone was being straightforward but learned since then that the City was not exactly straightforward. Mr. Harvey stated at the meeting, the City was asked if the NAACP could play a role in the hiring of the new police chief or at least have one person at the table. He stated this was agreed upon by the members at the meeting but shortly afterwards, the City, citing General Statutes, said that could not be done. Mr. Harvey stated they then modified their request for inclusion on the part of the NAACP but never received a response to that request.

Mr. Harvey stated the community should be a part of the hiring process of a police chief. He stated Roanoke Rapids is not the only city hiring a police chief. He mentioned a Greensboro newspaper he brought to the meeting that reported on the City of Greensboro’s efforts to have a citizen review board that included community leaders and clergy. Mr. Harvey stated they reached out to the community and included citizens in the process. He stated that is what he was hoping the City of Roanoke Rapids would do. He stated it is the culture of this City. He stated when you do not want to be inclusive, you do not want to change the culture. Mr. Harvey stated he knows the City Manager has already interviewed several candidates but would request that the City open this process back up and include citizens and organizations in the process.

Mr. John Espenshade of 70 Viking Lane, Littleton, NC read the following statement, a copy of which was presented to Mayor Doughtie for inclusion in the official minutes:

*I’m John Espenshade, Political Action Chair for the Halifax County Branch of the NAACP.*

*Before you sign off on the recommendation of the City Manager for a new chief of police, please consider the following:*

 *1. Talk to the 15-year veteran of your police force who is now the Littleton Chief of Police. If you do, you may learn about the culture of this police department and why you did not retain an African American woman who made it to the ranks*

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 *of management. Her experience is essential if you want to understand the dynamics in the department and the challenges a new chief will face creating a modern and diverse police department.*

 *2. Talk to Dr. Frank Baumgartner, the UNC expert on police profiling, who has analyzed Roanoke Rapids data on police stop and search practices. This is the data your police department routinely submits to the NC Department of Justice.* ***Your data.*** *You will learn that if you are black, you have a 40% greater probability of being searched after a traffic stop in Roanoke Rapids than whites stopped under similar circumstances.*

 *3. Ask if the racial disparity in the stop and search data is appropriate. Is the higher search rate for blacks evidence of good police work? Is it just by chance? Does it reflect racial bias? How does it compare to similar jurisdictions in North Carolina?*

 *4. Invite Dr. Baumgartner to come and meet with you and tell you what he has found analyzing your data.* ***You should know what your data reveals about your police department.***

 *5. The selection of the chief of police is too important to be filled without this council providing the city manager formal guidance on the challenges ahead. If you want policemen and women to be better able to relate effectively to all segments of the City’s population, tell him. And urge him to convene a citizen panel to give him direction on selecting the most qualified candidate for the needs of the entire community.*

*Interestingly, a citizen panel was agreed to in a joint NAACP - City meeting in August. Shortly thereafter the city manager reneged on the agreement referring to statutory obstacles. The NAACP obtained legal advice from a municipal government expert at UNC and*

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*proposed a role for a citizen’s panel well within North Carolina statutes. There has been no formal response to our proposal in more than two months. From this side of the table it looks like the city is intentionally excluding the community in the selection of a new chief of police. From our vantage point it looks like complacency with the status quo. That would explain why Roanoke Rapids department heads are 100% white while the city’s population is 31% African American. Ask yourselves how is it that black officers in the Roanoke Rapids police department represent only 12% of the force while 54% of the supervisors in the Halifax County Sheriff’s Department are black. You have fallen way behind the times.*

Mr. Glen Moseley of US Highway 125, Roanoke Rapids, NC stated he is here tonight representing AMVETS Post 320. He stated they would like permission to put a Vietnam and Korean War Memorial in Veteran’s Park. He stated he will have drawings to show the City Council at a later date but they would like to start as soon as possible.

Mayor Doughtie stated this is something that will need to be on the agenda to be addressed by Council.

Mr. Moseley stated he is on the agenda.

Mayor Doughtie explained to Mr. Moseley that he is on the agenda for public comment. He stated he would need to meet with the City Manager to present the request so that it could be put on the agenda for consideration and action. He pointed out that the Council meets again in two weeks.

City Manager Scherer suggested Mr. Moseley meet with him and Parks & Recreation Director Simeon and bring his drawings so they can make a recommendation to Council.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to approve the November 4, 2014 Council Minutes as presented.

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City Manager Scherer stated Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee will be attending the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) Advocacy Goals Conference in Raleigh on December 11, 2014. He stated the NCLM Constitution provides that each member municipality is entitled to one vote and each municipality sending delegates to the conference needs to designate one voting delegate.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Cowen, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to designate Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee as the City’s Voting Delegate for the NCLM Advocacy Goals Conference on December 11.

City Manager Scherer reported that tomorrow evening the HCIA is meeting to draft legislative goals for the upcoming session of the General Assembly. He stated he has submitted to Council some goals for consideration, and asked that any changes be provided to him before tomorrow evening.

City Manager Scherer reminded Council of the official groundbreaking of the Geenex Solar Center of Excellence on Thursday at 11:00 a.m. at the old airport site.

In the absence of Finance Director Hite, City Manager Scherer presented the following from the September and October Finance Reports:

*As we close the books for* ***September 30, 2014****, year-to-date revenues are $5,157,078.87 (this represents 33% of budgeted revenues) and year-to-date expenses are $4,727,078.28 (this represents 30% of budgeted expenses).*

*Result of operations, year-to-date revenues exceeded expenditures by $430,000.59.*

*Sales and Use Tax receipts for the current month total $192,555.63. (Up 33.0% compared to the same time frame last year.)*

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*As we close the books for* ***October 31, 2014****, year-to-date revenues are $6,268,822.25 (this represents 39.4% of budgeted revenues) and year-to-date expenses are $6,036,204.32 (this represents 37% of budgeted expenses).*

*Result of operations, year-to-date revenues exceeded expenditures by $232,617.93.*

*Sales and Use Tax receipts for the current month total $167,197.76. (Up 6.0% compared to the same time frame last year.)*

*The* ***Financial Report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2014*** *will be presented after approval by the Local Government Commission.*

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated it appears that things have somewhat turned around.

Mayor Doughtie stated our revenues should exceed expenditures through the remainder of the year due to the collection of property taxes.

 Interim Police Chief Jackson reported that the Uniform Patrol Division conducted 147 foot patrols which included the mill village, the South Rosemary area, and business and hotel areas. He reported they conducted 209 security checks, worked 158 incidents and investigated 95 wrecks.

 Interim Police Chief Jackson reported that the Criminal Investigation Division worked on 112 active cases, cleared 68 cases, filed a total of 54 charges, arrested 3 suspects for 20 break-ins and arrested the final suspect in the September 24 murder.

 Interim Police Chief Jackson reported that the K-9 Patrol Unit conducted 8 searches and the Narcotics Division seized 26 bindles of heroin and 155 grams of marijuana. He stated they also added 3 new State and Federal investigations.

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 Interim Police Chief Jackson reported that the Animal Control Officer answered 146 calls for service, issued 1 citation, reported 5 animal bites and picked up a total of 47 animals.

 Interim Police Chief Jackson reported that the C.O.P. Volunteers worked 45 hours. He stated he would like to thank them, the City, City Council and citizens for their help with the fish fry fundraiser. He stated they were able to raise over $3,600 in one day, with three other sales going on, to take underprivileged children shopping for Christmas. Interim Police Chief Jackson stated they plan to take the children to Wal-Mart on December 6 at 11:00 a.m. He stated it is really touching to see the looks of appreciation on the faces of these children. He stated something that really bothered him this weekend was the story of the death of the young boy shot while staying in a hotel in Raleigh for a soccer tournament. He stated he thought about his child that attends ball tournaments out of town. Interim Police Chief Jackson stated people need to hug their children and appreciate them because they are our future.

 Interim Police Chief Jackson reported on the following community outreach programs:

* Safety Pup made several visits;
* Self-defense course at Chamber;
* Assisted with Veteran’s Day Parade;
* Participated in the Walk Against Domestic Violence;
* Conducted tour of Police Department for Wendy Tickel’s exceptional children class.

Mayor Doughtie stated he had the privilege of attending the luncheon last year with the children. He thanked the community for their support of this program and commended Interim Police Chief Jackson and his department for their great efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he concurs with Mayor Doughtie. He stated he too appreciates the extra effort. He asked Interim Police Chief Jackson to report on the activities of the department to become more visible in the community.

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Interim Police Chief Jackson stated they started the “Know Your Cop” program. He explained that the officers go out on foot patrols, talk with folks in the neighborhoods and hand out valuable information. He stated it helps the officers to get to know our community better and also helps the citizens to get to know our officers.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked how the body camera program is working.

Interim Police Chief Jackson reported that they review the information on the cameras on a daily basis. He stated they are working great and he has received no complaints. He stated through the generosity of City Council and some of our citizens, we now have enough for each individual officer to have a body camera.

 Planning & Development Director Lasky reported that her department has completed review of the site plans for the addition to the dialysis center on Smith Church Road. She reported that they have approved site plans for Domino’s Pizza at 200 E. 10th Street and the new gymnasium for First Pentecostal Holiness Church at 109 Clearfield Drive.

 Planning & Development Director Lasky reported that they have issued building permits for Zaxby’s Restaurant at 1907 Julian R. Allsbrook Highway. She pointed out that due to the soil condition at the site, they had to put in pilings to support the foundation.

 Planning & Development Director Lasky reported that Sheetz is under construction and they anticipate opening in January or February. She also reported on business use permit applications for: New Dixie; Goldmine Bar & Lounge and Kidz World Playhouse in Becker Village Mall; and active building permits and inspections for the following: Friends of Moratock Scouters; Faith Learning Center; Mirs Bar & Grill;

 US Cellular; Sleepy’s Mattress.

 Councilman Smith stated he was contacted by a member of First Pentecostal Church about the City requiring them to put in a fire hydrant.

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 Planning & Development Director Lasky stated she was not familiar with that requirement.

 Councilman Smith stated the cost of the fire hydrant was $16,000.

 Fire Chief Coggins stated he will talk with Deputy Fire Marshal Hux and Chief Jean about this but feels sure that due to the size of the building, a fire hydrant is required.

 Councilman Smith stated there is a fire hydrant across the street and one at Becker Manor.

 Fire Chief Coggins explained that due to the capacity needed for this building, a sprinkler system was required but the church was able to work out verbiage and call the building a gymnatorium instead of an auditorium to keep from spending the money on a sprinkler system. He also explained that it would be a nightmare to lay a supply line across Old Farm Road to fight a fire. Fire Chief Coggins stated if the fire hydrant is required by code, our Fire Marshal will require it. He stated we did work with the church to keep them from having to install a sprinkler system.

 Planning & Development Director Lasky pointed out that these are not the City’s regulations but North Carolina Building Code requirements.

 Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported that the Library has applied for a technology grant from the State Library for e-book readers and e-books for children and adults. He stated there is no match required for this grant.

 Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported that the Jo Story retrofit is nearing completion. He stated the dehumidifier for the Aquatic Center has been ordered and the next phase will be to work with the Public Works Department to pour the cement slab for the unit. He stated the installation company will also be coordinating electrical service with Dominion.

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 Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported that plans for the skate park are moving forward with the community asking for adjustments to the elements of the park. He stated they will have another meeting shortly. He stated this has been a good process and he is proud to see so many members of the community, both young and old, come out and participate at these meetings.

 Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported on the status of plans for the Christmas Parade on December 7. He indicated that Ms. Wendy Tickel and her class will be the Grand Marshals. He also reported that the Elizabeth City State Marching Band will be the first collegiate band in our parade’s history. He stated the department has something exciting planned for escorting the Grand Marshals and Santa.

 Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if the swim teams are able to use the Aquatic Center.

 Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated yes.

 Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if people are attending the arthritis classes.

 Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated it is a modified schedule but some do still come.

 Councilman Smith pointed out that he was at the swim meet in Henderson and one of the members of the swim team thanked the City Council for making the Aquatic Center available to the team. He stated he believes the team won that meet.

 Public Works Director Chalker reported that it is astounding the amount of money assessed year-to-date for lot cutting and abatement of nuisances. He stated that amount totals $53,318.

 Public Works Director Chalker encouraged City Council and citizens to make a visit to the Public Works facility to see the changes made. He pointed out that a lot of our employees have done this work internally.

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 Public Works Director Chalker reported that a lot of leaves have fallen and they are in full swing with three leaf trucks out. He reported that they will have four trucks out next week collecting refuse. He stated due to the holiday, they will be collecting the routes for Thursday and Friday on Wednesday.

 Public Works Director Chalker reported that all of the trees on the Avenue, as well as the Cedar tree next to the Post Office, have been trimmed in preparation for the holidays and the Christmas Parade.

 Public Works Director Chalker reported on the weather link recently installed on the City’s webpage. He stated our weather station tracks current weather conditions in Roanoke Rapids and was recently shared with the National Weather Service and WRAL.

 Public Works Director Chalker reported that he is preparing a list for Gov.Deals to present to Council at an upcoming meeting.

 Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the web address for the weather link.

 Public Works Director Chalker stated www.roanokerapidsnc.com. He stated the link is at the top right-hand corner.

 Fire Chief Coggins stated on behalf of his department and all City employees, he would like to thank Council for the Wal-Mart gift cards.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that during the month of October, the Fire Department responded to 162 calls, 122 of them being first responder calls with an average response time of 4 minutes. He indicated the total damages incurred were $7,400 and the total average of property protected was $15,532,100 where damages occurred. He reported that the firefighters were engaged in 755 man-hours of training on various topics.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that Deputy Fire Marshal Hux and Chief Jean performed 33 fire prevention inspections as well as 7 plan reviews.

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 He stated Chief Jean and Deputy Fire Marshal Hux attended “Operation Save-A-Life” and picked up smoke detectors free of charge for the City and the County. He stated Deputy Fire Marshal Hux also attended Leadership Roanoke Valley this past month.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that this past week the entire department did a walk-through of Sheetz. He stated the purpose of the walk-through is to become familiar with building construction and to talk about how the building would react under fire conditions.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that after tomorrow, he and Chief Clements will have completed the Fire Service Leadership Institute in Wilson.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that Firefighter Butts and Firefighter Lindsey attended school at Cleveland County Community College where they were able to complete Fire, Life & Safety Educator I Certification.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that this weekend he, along with Lieutenant Pearson and Chief Clements, will be going to the National Fire Academy. He stated they will be attending mid-level and upper level management classes. He stated it is also an excellent opportunity to network with other officers throughout the state.

 Fire Chief Coggins reported that they are in the process of promoting Hunter Carawan to the position of Engineer. He stated they are also in the process of hiring a new firefighter to replace one of our employees that went out on disability.

 Fire Chief Coggins also reported that they plan to resubmit the AFG Grant for air packs.

 Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the free smoke detectors would be available to any citizen.

 Fire Chief Coggins stated they are available to any homeowner but not renters as smoke detectors are the responsibility of landlords. He pointed out that citizens can call the Fire Department and they will come out and install them where they need to go, and they will also check the

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 batteries in existing smoke detectors.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported that she attended a workshop that was mandatory for all new Main Street Managers. She stated she also attended a NC Main Street Solutions Grant Workshop which is required prior to applying for a Main Street Solutions Grant.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported that the Annual Christmas Open House on the Avenue was held on Sunday, November 9. She stated several shops and restaurants participated and reported above average sales and foot traffic.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported that “Small Business Saturday” is November 29. She stated Main Street Roanoke Rapids was awarded the American Express Small Business Saturday Neighborhood Champion Award which will support our “shop local” campaign this holiday season. She stated to kick off Small Business Saturday activities, Main Street Roanoke Rapids will be partnering with HCC’s Small Business Center to host a reception for local businesses at Noon on Tuesday, November 25 at HCC.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported that to coincide with the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 4 and to kick off a weekend of Christmas events along the Avenue, Main Street Roanoke Rapids will host a “Trimming of the Tree” Contest at Centennial Park. She stated the Chamber did this several years ago. She stated several trees will be on display and the public will vote on the winner.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported on the following events for Christmas on the Avenue to be held on Saturday, December 6 from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.:

* 1:00 p.m.: Free tree ornament craft time and museum tours at Roanoke Canal Museum.
* 2:15 p.m.: Free Holiday Story Time at Roanoke Rapids Public Library.
* 3:00 p.m.: Free iCreate Craft Time at Halifax County Arts Council Studio plus a special appearance by Santa Claus. Photos with Santa offered by Works of Tart Photography. Free photo session plus specially priced photo packages will be available for purchase.

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* Stores and restaurants will be open.

Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported that Countryside Interiors is the newest recipient of the Main Street Roanoke Rapids Façade Grant.

Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported on the following new businesses:

* “Asbert Clothing”, located on 11th Street, opened in September 2014.
* In the 100 block of Roanoke Avenue, plans are underway for a Laundromat and two additional retail spaces. Project is in the beginning stages and opening is still to be determined.
* One new business (financial service office) is scheduled to open by the end of the year at 24 E. 10th Street. Building renovations should start soon.
* Two potential new businesses (1 professional services and 1 retailer) are actively seeking rental space on the Avenue.
* One non-profit is actively seeking rental space on the Avenue or another strip center.

Main Street/Development Director Caudle reported on the following existing businesses:

* Maxway, located at 1041 Roanoke Avenue, announced it will be closing by early 2015. Store closing was a corporate decision, and all Maxway employees are being transfer to our local Roses located on Julian R Allsbrook Highway. I’ve already had preliminary discussions with the property owner and will be actively trying to fill this large space.
* Double R Sports Bar is moving to a different city.
* I continue to build relationships with existing Avenue District business owners on a daily basis. I averaged roughly 25 existing business contacts over the last 4 weeks.

 Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if we have a list of all available spaces in the business district.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle stated that was a part of their plan of work and it has been completed. She stated it will be included on their new website so anyone can get access to that information. She stated we are hoping that things like this will help us market ourselves.

 Mayor Doughtie asked if she had been able to establish contact with the gentleman at the Small Business Center at HCC.

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 Main Street/Development Director Caudle stated she has quickly begun building a strong relationship with Jerry Edmonds, Director of the Small Business Center. She stated they are partnering on the Small Business Saturday luncheon as well as working together on various other projects. She stated they talk almost daily.

 Mayor Doughtie stated Allen Purser can provide helpful information as well.

 Main Street/Development Director Caudle stated she and Allen also work together.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to go into closed session to discuss a personnel matter as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6).

**[Remainder of page intentionally left blank.]**

**Minute Book Pages 17495, 17496, 17497, 17498, 17499 and 17500 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.**

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Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to return to open session.

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order in open session.

City Council discussed a personnel matter in closed session. No action was taken.

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

 

 12/2/14