



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, October 3, 2017** at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

Present: Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem
Ernest C. Bobbitt)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Carol H. Cowen)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
Chuck Hasty, Police Chief
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager

In the absence of Mayor Doughtie, Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with prayer.

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Council members about any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening.

There being no conflicts, motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for October 3, 2017 as presented.

Special Recognitions

Community Planning Month

Planning & Development Director Lasky announced October was National Community Planning Month. She stated the annual celebration has been taking place for about ten years. She said she would like to bring this to the City of Roanoke Rapids on an annual basis to identify community planning efforts that the City is involved in as demonstrated through change in the community as well as changes with existing development and new development. It is a chance to raise the visibility of planning, the planning profession and the positive impact it has on the community.

She reported throughout the month, the department would be reaching out through social media and the City's website highlighting examples of community planning throughout Roanoke Rapids.

She presented the following Proclamation recognizing October as National Community Planning Month:

COMMUNITY PLANNING MONTH PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, change is constant and affects all cities, towns, suburbs, counties, boroughs, townships, rural areas, and other places; and

WHEREAS, community planning and plans can help manage this change in a way that provides better choices for how people work and live; and

WHEREAS, community planning provides an opportunity for all residents to be meaningfully involved in making choices that determine the future of their community; and

WHEREAS, the full benefits of planning requires public officials and citizens who understand, support, and demand excellence in planning and plan implementation; and

WHEREAS, the month of October is designated as National Community Planning Month throughout the United States of America and its territories, and

WHEREAS, American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, endorse National Community Planning Month as an opportunity to highlight the contributions sound planning and plan implementation make to the quality of our settlements and environment; and

WHEREAS, the celebration of National Community Planning Month gives us the opportunity to publicly recognize the participation and dedication of the members of planning commissions and other citizen planners who have contributed their time and expertise to the improvement of the **City of Roanoke Rapids**; and

WHEREAS, we recognize the many valuable contributions made by professional community and regional planners of the **City of Roanoke Rapids** and extend our heartfelt thanks for the continued commitment to public service by these professionals;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the month of October 2017 is hereby designated as **Community Planning Month** in **City of Roanoke Rapids** in conjunction with the celebration of National Community Planning Month.

Adopted this 3rd day of October, 2017.

Chief Elected Official (SEAL)

Clerk

She said the proclamation was to also recognize and honor publicly the planning board members and citizen planners that have contributed their time and expertise into the decision-making process and citizen input through various plans, rezoning applications and long range planning efforts that are done throughout the community.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to proclaim October as National Community Planning Month.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the September 19, 2017 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as written.

New Business

Presentation of FY 2016-2017 Annual Report of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Ms. Lori Medlin, President and CEO of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau recognized several of her board members (Percilla West – Board Chairperson and Tina Gregory) and staff (Rich Lithgow and Susan Wilhelm) that were present at the meeting.

Ms. Medlin began her report by sharing a new video they put together to promote Halifax County.

Ms. Medlin highlighted the following from the FY 2016-2017 report:

- The County's tourism industry achieved a record economic impact in 2016 with direct visitor spending of \$91.78 million.(Up 2.3% from previous year).
- Spending by travelers directly and indirectly supports over 1,000 jobs which bring in over \$7.96 million in state and local taxes.
- They work with the Canal Museum & Trail, Veterans Museum, Roanoke Rapids Lake Park, hotels and restaurants.
- Occupancy tax collections were up 4.25% with revenues surpassed that \$17 million.
- The State says visitor spending saves each household in Halifax County \$152.84.
- Halifax County CVC is solely funded by the occupancy tax left here by visitors, not local tax dollars. The monies they bring in is the money they spend to promote the area.
- Halifax County has a 5% occupancy tax and Roanoke Rapids has an additional 1% occupancy tax. 85% of the occupancy tax they collect comes from Roanoke Rapids.
- Their most exciting projects this year has been the video and rebuilding the VisitHalifax.com website. They were the first CVB in the State that partnered with VisitNC. Their website won the NC gold award for best online communications.
- Helped fund period clothing and new forge at Historic Halifax; audio tours UGoTour; achieved Certified Retirement Community Program; maintained Chargepoint stations; Hwy. 301 Endless Yard Sale; Amtrak Station Development in Weldon; Ledgerwood Field Enhancement project; Town of Halifax Development Plan – Canoe Outtake.
- Visitor Center Dog Park averages 121 visitors/day with a yearly count of 44,213. Visitor Center averages 80 visitors/day with a yearly count of 28,635.
- They support many community events.
- Marketing: VisitNC site, Our State Magazine, Carolina Field Trips Magazine, USA Today, billboards and Carolina Playbook.
- Digital Platforms: 2,280,128 impressions on *Facebook*, *Instagram* followers up 66%, 722 average monthly *Pinterest* viewers, 36,321 Tweet impressions.
- Budget of Roanoke Rapids Occupancy Tax: Support operations of the

- Roanoke Canal Museum, Roanoke Canal Trail, Roanoke Avenue promotions, Interchange project, advertising and marketing, logo program.
- Beyond the 1% occupancy tax, CVB had a direct marketing spend over \$231,000 for the City of Roanoke Rapids.
- Generated over 63,916,858 billboard impressions.
- Revamped newsletter.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how the \$5,000 budget for Roanoke Avenue Promotion was used and if it went to the Main Street Director. Ms. Medlin replied it does not go to the Main Street Director. It goes toward events Main Street may have such as the Seafood & Shag event held last year. She said she could look and see what was coded to that line and let her know.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how the \$42,000 for Marketing and Advertising was used for Roanoke Rapids. Ms. Medlin replied for print, billboards, public relations etc. She said she could also look up what was coded to that line and get the information to her.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked what was a Hotel Logo Campaign. Ms. Medlin said that was a billboard campaign with hotel logos on it. She stated although some billboards have Weldon and Roanoke Rapids hotels on it, only the ones for Roanoke Rapids are coded to that line.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked for Ms. Medlin to explain the \$15,000 for Administrative Expenses. She replied by the law that initiates the occupancy tax, they are allowed to use any of those dollars for administrative expenses involved in creating any of this. She added they use it mostly to hire consultants such as Chris Wicker to do work for them like bringing the baseballs teams here to Roanoke Rapids. She said it is not used for their salaries, but it is for anything administrative used for Roanoke Rapids.

Councilman Smith asked if that 1% generated \$142,000. Ms. Medlin replied it did and that was what they were projecting for next year. She said the hotels were not at full capacity, but they were doing well with the hotel properties they did have. She said to grow that number very much, they would have to get new hotels rooms into the market and be able to fill them up.

Councilman Smith stated he knew the hotels have helped the Little League a lot when they give the people special rates when they have the tournaments; they do a great job.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the 2.3% increase over the previous year was the trend. Ms. Medlin replied those numbers ended in January and they had an amazing summer. Those numbers were given to them from the State and she did not think they take into account all the tourism spending in the county. She said they were on track to beat that next year.

Councilman Smith asked who did the video. Ms. Medlin replied that was another partnership with VisitNC and they were able to hire their videographer, Bill Russ.

City Manager Scherer asked Ms. Medlin if she could send the City the link for the video so it could be put on the City's website. Ms. Medlin said they would send it to him in the morning.

Consideration of Ordinance Declaring a Road Closure for the Christmas Parade

Police Chief Hasty stated in light of recent changes by NCDOT regarding closures of state roads for special events, it is necessary to adopt an ordinance in order to close Roanoke Avenue (NC 48) for the Roanoke Rapids Christmas Parade on December 3, 2017. He stated an ordinance has been prepared for Council's consideration which will be provided to NCDOT prior to the event.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adopt the following ordinance:

ORDINANCE NO. 2017.04

AN ORDINANCE DECLARING A ROAD CLOSURE FOR A CHRISTMAS PARADE

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges a long tradition of providing an annual Christmas parade for the pleasure of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges its citizens realize a financial benefit from holding an annual Christmas parade; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids acknowledges a parade requires approximately two (2) hours to install signing and traffic control, and also requires approximately two (2) hours for removing signs, traffic control and litter;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids pursuant to the authority granted by G.S. 20-169 that they do hereby declare a temporary road closure during the day(s) and times set forth below on the following described portion of a State Highway System route:

Date(s): Sunday, December 3, 2017

Times: 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Route Description: Roanoke Avenue (NC 48) between 14th Street
and 1st Street

This ordinance to become effective when signs are erected giving notice of the limits and times of the parade, and implementation of adequate traffic control to guide through vehicles around the parade route.

ADOPTED this 3rd day of October, 2017.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer announced a public meeting is scheduled for the Chaloner Community Forum on Tuesday, October 10th at 5:30 p.m. at the Chaloner Recreation Center. The intent of the public meeting is to gather community feedback about proposed improvement plans for the facilities at Chaloner Recreation Park, Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and Wheeler Park. Once this feedback is reviewed, final plans will be developed and grant applications will be submitted for the implementation of these plans.

He said the official time for Halloween Trick or Treat activities will be 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. on the 31st. The Parks and Recreation Department will issue details later on activities planned at TJ Davis, Doyle Field and Chaloner Recreation Center.

He said the Public Works Department continues to implement a new Internet-based telephone system in all departments. Our intent in this project is to improve our communications capability with the public and internally while achieving significant cost savings over the current phone system.

City Manager Scherer stated the question came up at last week's Halifax County Intergovernmental Association (HCIA) about the need to have Roanoke Avenue repaired. It's my understanding that NCDOT plans to do so next year. They are continuing with projects such as the repaving of the section of Julian Allsbrook Highway, the extension of Premier Blvd. to Hwy 125 and the widening of Hwy 125 and Old Farm Road to Interstate 95.

He announced a new store on the Avenue, Mill City, will have its grand opening this Saturday. It is located next to where the old Countryside Interiors store was. The Main Street merchants are planning their annual Holiday Open House during the weekend of November 4th and 5th. A concern of the Main Street Roanoke Rapids group is part the ongoing tax reform discussions in Washington, as the elimination of Federal historic tax credits is being considered. State historic tax credits are “piggy backed” onto the Federal tax credits, so that if the Federal tax credits are eliminated, so are the State credits, which would be a major detriment to downtown development. Work continues at the 1026 Roanoke Avenue site with the construction of cement block seat walls and sealing the brick walls of the building on either side.

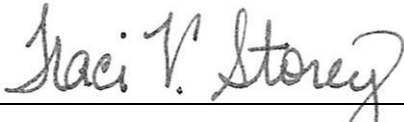
He reported Ms. Lasky is working on getting draft proposals for estimates from contractors for the demolition of the front of the Peoples Theater. We are looking at only the front of the building (auditorium) needing to be removed, leaving the rest of the building in place. Her department has been extremely busy with inspections on new buildings and renovation, such as the new Manning and KIPP schools, along with plan reviews for the new DrugCo store and parking lot, the Early College program expansion at the high school armory and other facilities.

He said the grand opening for the new Center for Energy Education is this Thursday at 11:00 a.m. at the old airport site. This is the facility constructed by Geenex to facilitate interest in solar energy education and use.

City Manager Scherer announced October is Fire Prevention Month and the Fire Department will be conducting fire safety classes and demonstrations at local schools and other venues during the month.

Other Business/Comments by Council Members

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adjourn at 5:50 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: October 17, 2017