



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, November 20, 2018 at 5:15 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

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

**Council Members**

Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney  
Traci Storey, City Clerk  
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director  
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager  
Chuck Hasty, Police Chief  
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

**Absent:** Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

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

**Adoption of Business Agenda**

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

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for November 20, 2018 as presented.

## Special Recognitions

### Fire Department New Hire and Promotion Ceremony

Fire Chief Coggins conducted a New Hire and Promotions Ceremony including the pinning of the following individuals:

- ❖ Mr. Jeffery Brown hired as Firefighter (August 6, 2018) was pinned by his wife.
- ❖ Mr. Clayton Barmer promoted from Firefighter to Engineer (July 8, 2018) was pinned by his father.

## Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the November 7, 2018 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as written.

## City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer was absent. A written report was submitted to Council.

## Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Etheridge gave the following financial report for the month of October. She reported during the month, the Finance Department issued 106 purchase orders, wrote 84 payroll checks, and processed 319 direct deposit vouchers and 245 accounts payable checks. After review of the operating statement, the month of October shows the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$6,127,468. The percentage of actual monies collected of adopted budgeted figures total 33.9%. Year to date expenditures totaled \$5,112,623. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures total 28.3%. After the month of October, 33.33% of the budget year has been completed. As a result, year to date revenues exceeded expenditures by \$1,014,845.

She stated during the month, the City received Ad Valorem Tax revenue, Sales & Use Tax revenue and KB Reynolds Grant funding for Chaloner Park totaling \$150,000. Operating cash and investment reserves are still critical in offsetting revenue short falls at the beginning of the fiscal year and in October as well as continuing operations for the remainder of fiscal year 2018-2019. During the month of October, there were

no expenditures paid on behalf of the Series 2017A and 2017B theatre bonds. Once Local Government Commission approval is obtained for the 2017-2018 fiscal year audit, Mr. Gregory T. Redman will present the audit to Council at the closest upcoming meeting.

Councilman Smith asked Finance Director Etheridge if the KB Reynolds grant was part of the monies that came in and was included in the \$1M. She replied that was correct, the City received \$150,000 from KB Reynolds. He said he noticed the Sales & Use Tax revenue was for August and asked if the next tax revenue would be for November. She replied yes, that will be for September sales.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the City was about where they usually are. She said she had taken a look at the Sales & Use Tax revenue and it was running parallel to last year; combined average they were looking at 16% which is where the City was this same time last year.

## Departmental Reports

### **Human Resources**

Human Resources Manager Kearney presented the October report. She reported during the month of October and at the present time, the City has the following vacancies: Code Enforcement Officer, Police Officer and PT Water Aerobics Zumba Instructor. She said they were getting ready to fill the Zumba Instructor position, probably in the next week or so. The City hired two new employees during the month of October: Equipment Mechanic and Street Maintenance Worker.

She announced the BARC Committee was in the process of planning the Employee and Service Awards Luncheon which will be held December 19<sup>th</sup> at Kirkwood Adams from 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. They should be getting a flyer in their next packet.

Mayor Doughtie asked which department the City received an Intern application for. She replied the Planning Department.

### **Police**

Police Chief Hasty presented the department's October report. He reported last week they had a Captain's Assessment Panel to determine who would fill Captain Andy Bryant's position once he retires on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The panel consisted of department heads, Police Chiefs from towns and cities in the county, community activists, business leaders and the media. He said there were very good candidates that applied and the process went smoothly. Lt. Charles Vaught who is in attendance was selected

to fill the Captain's position effective December 1<sup>st</sup>. He will supervise the Patrol Division of the department. He announced they will have Sergeant interviews next week and the first week in December they will hold Lieutenant interviews.

He announced December 15<sup>th</sup> will be the Christmas for Kids shopping trip. It starts at 9 a.m. at ChickFilA with breakfast for the kids. Then they will go over to Walmart for shopping. He asked if anyone wanted to volunteer to help or to take part to please come out; it is very humbling to see.

Chief Hasty updated everyone on Edward Murphy, the man known as the man living under the I-95 Bridge. He spoke to the medical staff and he is still in critical condition at this time and the outcome is bleak. They were able to make contact with family members in the Greensboro-High Point area through the media, social media, print and television. This enabled them to get the family in contact with the medical personnel.

He said the R.A.G.E. Wrestling event was a success. It is one of their major fundraisers for the Christmas for the Kids program.

### **Planning & Development**

Planning & Development Director Lasky presented the report for October. She stated the Sonic Drive Thru has scheduled demolition and then rescheduled several different times. At this time, they do not have a tentative date for the demolition. She noted a lot of residents in the community are interested because the current business is the one to be demolished for the new one. The weather has held up the construction of the new project and they are trying to keep the existing business open as long as they can.

She reported the house at 1000 Cedar Street was demolished recently. This was part of their Code Enforcement actions and Council had approved that order. Code Enforcement staff is looking at other homes as well and working the process; some have been successes while others may be brought to Council in the future. The department is exploring some different grant funding opportunities for improvement of housing.

The department has been spending time working on the extension of Premier Boulevard, widening of Hwy. 125 and the extension of American Legion Road. The real estate professionals are doing valuations as part of the acquisition to get the road right of way through there. While it is outside the city limits, it is still in the City's zoning jurisdiction. Research activity has been done to show why the zoning was at

one point classified the way it was. They anticipate seeing some changes as a result of that in the future.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if there was someone reviewing the City Ordinances. Clerk Storey replied yes, American Legal Publishing has been hired to do this. She has sent any updated ordinances since the last revision, but has not heard back from them at this point. They will review the ordinances to see if any have been outdated and update new ones. Then they will send a draft for our review.

Mayor Doughtie asked if someone could touch base with them and report back by the next meeting when the City would expect to hear back from them. Clerk Storey replied yes she would do that.

Mayor Doughtie said it appears from the numbers there is a lot of things going on. Planning & Development Director Lasky agreed. She said especially with the new Premier Boulevard building and the new apartment building which will start construction any time now as well as improvements throughout the city.

Mayor Doughtie asked if people were complaining that it was taking so long for Sonic to be taken down or were they just inquisitive. She replied one of the issues is when the contractor applies for the demolition permit, the Planning Department is responsible for contacting all the utility providers for water, electric and gas. They send the releases in for the utility company to schedule a time go out to disconnect and then the contractor will change the date. They have already sent in four different dates. For companies such as Piedmont Natural Gas from the Tarboro area, it can disrupt some scheduling for them. Mayor Doughtie said he thought she was talking about the public was complaining. She said the public has asked questions because they want to know how long they would not be able to go to a place they like to eat.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon was absent. (Monthly report was submitted with agenda packet).

### **Public Works**

Public Works Director Chalker presented the October report. During the month of October, the Public Works Department received 182 calls for service, 77 calls were concerning limbs, junk, and loose materials, 40 calls were for property/building maintenance, 19 calls were for street maintenance, 39 calls were for solid waste related issues and 7 calls for lot/grass issues. He said the department sent out 100 letters because people were not maintaining their property and they performed work on 60 of those properties. They assessed a total value of \$20,554.50. He stated the

extended amount of rain and warmer weather through the month of October kept that season going on. For the year, they have assessed a total of \$95,289 in fees and labor. He said they liked to talk about that because some people do not think they do it but the numbers talk and they are proud of their forces and how hard they work.

He said as Council came in this afternoon, they probably noticed a new piece of equipment sitting outside. It is a RAVO sweeper that the department has had for about two weeks. There has been some minor issues with paperwork, bill of sale, etc. but it all came together today and they were able to bring it here on display for them. This sweeper is about a third of the size of the current sweeper they have. It does not require a CDL license to drive it so that gives the department a little more flexibility with people that work for the department and the ability to train more people to operate that piece of equipment. It cost about \$240,000. Although it is smaller, it collects more material before they have to dump it. The sweeper will be out on the street full time very soon. They are trying to design a graphics package to go on the outside of it. They are reaching out to some of the kids in town to get an idea of what they would like to see driving up and down the streets.

Public Works Director Chalker said the crews were busy preparing the Avenue with Christmas lighting. They are getting the tree ready for the Tree Lighting Ceremony. They are also making some minor changes with the Christmas decorations in the 200 and 1000 blocks of Roanoke Avenue.

He said they have been working heavily in the City's limb and leaf yard on Sam Powell Dairy Road. They recently ground about a year's worth of limbs which was the first time they have done that since he has been the Public Works Director. Now they have all these chips and mulch and have to figure out what to do with it. They have a long list of people asking for it, but they have to find time during their busy schedule to haul the material out to the farmers and other people that spread it out and compost it. They eventually use it for land application to recover the value of the soil on their farms.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they pick it up or does the City take it to them. Public Works Director Chalker replied some people pick it up but most of it they have to haul because they have to get rid of it. He reminded them of the yard on Hinson Street, eventually the material will self-ignite. They have to keep turning it and measuring the temperature. They just received a new probe today which is about a four feet tall thermometer to measure the internal temperatures. When he speaks of limb yard management that is a big part of it.

Public Works Director Chalker reported they have installed new flooring in the lobby at City Hall. There has been some issues with the carpeting that has been there for a long time and over the years coming in the front entrance with wet feet. The City

cannot afford to put new flooring in all at once so they decided to start chipping away at it a little at the time. The lobby is just about complete and there is some painting that needs to be done. There is one other office where an employee has some allergies and they plan to do that office next. He said his departments does this work and they have some very talented staff that afford them to do the work themselves.

He said he and City Manager Scherer met last week with some representatives of Dominion Power. Dominion is going to use the City of Roanoke Rapids as the first city in North Carolina to roll out LED street lighting. They have picked the 500, 600 and 700 blocks of Franklin Street to test some of these LED lights. He did not have a date yet as to when they would be installed because Dominion is waiting on their inventory. Once they get them up he will let Council know so they can go see the new LED lighting. He added there were only two styles of lighting: bright lights for thoroughfares and not so bright lights for neighborhoods. At the end of a five year period, the City should have a significant savings on the line item for street lighting. Right now from a budget standpoint, the City spends \$400,000 per year on street lighting which comes out of the Public Works departmental budget. He hopes the lights will be pleasing to them and they can move forward with the project. They will not be able to switch them all out at once because it would cost too much money. Dominion has agreed to go ahead and switch out the oldest fixtures the City has, about 600 fixtures city-wide, free of charge. We will start seeing a large number of LED lights showing up on the city streets relatively soon.

Public Works Director Chalker announced there have been three very successful shows at the Roanoke Rapids Theatre. The Charlie Daniels show was last weekend, November 10<sup>th</sup> and this past weekend there was a country show put on by a radio station as a fundraiser and Sunday, the Christian comedian, Chonda Pierce was in the building. All the shows were well attended and came off without a hitch.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked when the City has to cut the grass and the Public Works Department sends out a letter stating how much they owe, what kind of return does the City get; does everyone that gets a letter pay the City. He explained they first send a letter saying they owe the money and if they do not pay that, they send a letter stating the City has assessed a tax lien to their property. They do not send it to collection or harass them to pay the City. It is simply assessed as a tax lien to the property so somewhere down the road if that property comes up for sale, during the property deed search, their job is to look for any liens on the property. When that lien shows up, it has to be satisfied before the sale of the property can go forward. That is how the City gets its money back. Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if that happens frequently or does everybody pay when they are supposed to. He said he did not have a percentage, but he guessed it would be 50/50. Some people are bothered when they

owe the City money and go ahead and pay. Some do not bat an eye and the City continues to cut the grass and assess the liens.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was a game plan or timeframe for the installation of the 600 city-wide lights because when citizens see the new streetlights, they are going to question when they were going to get theirs. Public Works Director Chalker replied they did not have a game plan just yet and since they are basically free of charge that will be at Dominion's choice to do that. They will involve the City with that. He believed Dominion would already have the lights up if they had the inventory. Once they put the few lights up on Franklin Street in the residential neighborhood and the City certifies that it is okay, Dominion will then start installing the 600 lights which are also in residential areas. If the City has the opportunity to interject which neighborhoods they do first, they will certainly do so. He said they would consult the Police Department first of all from a crime standpoint to make sure good lighting is put in the more crime ridden neighborhoods. One term they heard in these meetings is these lights may not be as bright, but the clarity of the light is much better.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they had ever investigated if there was a market for the wood chips such as the pellet plant in Gaston. Public Works Director Chalker replied they had done so quite extensively because they would really like to get some money from this product. He said if they could imagine what they pick up off the street every day, there is a mixture of tree limbs, leaves and other items. Because of that some of the streams they had investigated that possibility expect it to be extremely clean and a certain amount of humidity so it does not always fit their specifications. They even approached the local paper mill a few years back and they know exactly what they are cutting off the trees before they chip them up for paper and they do not want to change their formula because they do not want a lot of variance in their boiler fuel. They continue to look for ways to get a return on it but they have not gotten there yet. Their biggest goal is to get rid of it as quick as they can, into a green use, so recycling it as a farm use is a great use.

## **Fire**

Assistant Fire Chief Patrick presented the report for October. He reported the department responded to 193 calls of service throughout the month with an average response time being 5.7 minutes. During this time the remnants of Hurricane Michael came through which in one night, the shift responded to 12 calls within 1-1/2 hours. Firefighters were engaged in 648.5 man-hours of training throughout the month of October. The inspections division conducted 15 inspections and completed 3 plan reviews.



He thanked Chief Coggins for taking over and helping out with Fire Prevention month in October were they visited all the schools including Roanoke Rapids High School, Belmont, Manning, Clara Hearne, Just For Kids and the Gingerbread House. During that time there were multiple fire prevention activities from our smoke house and puppet show which they carried to the schools. They hope to add to the puppet show to make it better next year. They spoke with over 2,000 kids and adults about fire prevention.

Assistant Fire Chief Patrick said the department has started to work on a shop behind Station 1. The shop was formerly located at Kenny Hale's building by Manning School. The school system donated that building to fire department, they just had to move it. With the help of the Public Works department and some of their equipment along with most of the firefighters, they were able to move the building to the fire station. It is still in the works and hopefully the vinyl siding will be put on it in the next week or so with the help of Chief Coggins before he retires. Once the project is completed, they will give Council a report on the savings by the departments doing the work and the school donating the building.

He reported the department participated in the Touch A Truck event held at the Roanoke Rapids Theatre the first part of October. They also participated in the Trunk or Treat at TJ Davis and Halloween activities at Chaloner Recreation Center.

He updated Council on Battalion Chief Hawkins. He was supposed to start his bone marrow transplant the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of December, but something was not right with his stem cells; they were not quite high as they needed to be so he was going back today for some treatments. He has not heard how that went today and asked for everyone to keep him in their prayers. He said hopefully everything will move forward after this and he will be able to participate in the Christmas Parade where he will be the Hometown Hero.

Chief Coggins added that he believes City Manager Scherer and whoever else helped make the decision, made the right choice and Assistant Chief Patrick will take the Fire Department from where it is now to greater heights. He was excited for him and excited for the organization.

Mayor Doughtie stated he believes the City has a very good Fire Department and thinks whether you are very good or not as good, comes from your leadership. He thanked Chief Coggins for the years he has done that. Like Captain Bryant who was here at the last meeting, at some point you realize it's time to move on to that next stage. If you wait too late, the stage goes on by and you don't get on it. He applauded

Chief Coggins for the years of service he has given to the community. He said he has known him for a long time, and on behalf of the Council and Fire Department, they appreciate him and wish him a long retirement.

Assistant Chief Patrick agreed and said Chief Coggins had started some things that will really help the Fire Department in the future such as the training facility he and Chief Clements worked on and they hopefully will take that a step further. He stated Chief Coggins will be dearly missed.

### **Main Street**

Main Street Director Caudle presented her monthly report. She stressed the importance of shopping local during the holiday season. She hopes everyone has visited some of the local businesses whether they were on the Avenue or not. Over the last few weeks, many of them have had Holiday Open Houses. There is a very important day for the local businesses which is Small Business Saturday on November 24<sup>th</sup>. Many businesses along the uptown and downtown commercial district will be open and they have lots of gifts that can meet everyone's holiday needs. As always with any business, big or small, the fourth quarter of a retail business is critical for their success. With our small businesses it is very important for them to be in black through this holiday season, specifically for the Avenue businesses. Next spring will likely be tough for them with sales when NCDOT does the resurfacing project. It will be a brief inconvenience for them for a long term positive benefit for their businesses. She asked everyone when they plan their holiday shopping to please think of the local businesses. Even the ones they may not have visited lately have lots of gift offerings.

She announced numerous upcoming Christmas activities. The City Christmas Tree Lighting will be held Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. Following that event from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m., Les Atkins Studio is hosting a Sensitive Santa which is a Santa prepared to have photo opportunities and interact with kids with special needs of all kinds. This is something a high school student came up with and has worked directly Les Atkins to make happen. This is something the community has not had before and there are lots of kids here that could benefit. These sessions are by appointment only so if you know someone or someone special to you could benefit from this please reach out to him. The Roanoke Rapids Christmas Parade is scheduled for Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2 p.m. along Roanoke Avenue. Other events happening will be the Grinch that Stole Christmas at the Public Library on Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, the Jo Story Senior Center will be hosting their Christmas Social on Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and Christmas on the Canal (Santa will be there as well) is Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. There are several other events shaping up now so as they get

that information, they will share it with them. She reminded everyone again to support the local businesses and events through the holiday season.

Main Street Director Caudle said Main Street Roanoke Rapids non-profit has worked directly with the City on some Christmas decoration upgrades in the 1000 and 200 blocks of Roanoke Avenue. They hope to get them up before the Tree Lighting on November 29<sup>th</sup>.

The Roanoke Rapids Wayfinding Signage that was slated to go up this month will go up late 2018 or early 2019. They are still on track with the details to get the signs installed correctly. The Roanoke Avenue resurfacing and streetscape project kickoff date is March 15, 2019. They are estimating it to be a four week process. During that time businesses will still be open and roads should still be open although it may be inconvenient to drive, but there are lots of back parking lots and alley access to all the businesses. She thanked the Daily Herald for running an article about it and Main Street will continue to work with the local media to continue to push this information out to the public. They did their first mailing to the businesses along Roanoke Avenue that will be affected by the project. They are trying to clearly communicate this project and the implementation process so everyone will be prepared.

Councilman Smith stated he was familiar with Sarah K. Evans because he read about her in the Southern Christian book. He said he noticed in her report about a grant, but he did not remember it coming before City Council. Main Street Director Caudle replied the City did not apply, Main Street assisted another organization with the application. The letter of intent was due in early October and they are awaiting semifinalist notification. If the other organization that applied for the grant gets the opportunity to submit a full grant application, that organization will be taking the lead on completing the project. As of now she has no other details outside of that. She added there is no determination on what the art installation would be, that is part of the next round. From her understanding the letter of intent was just stating there is a story that could potentially be told through art here. If they get the semi-finalist opportunity, they have to go through a round of public meetings and engage a lot of community organizations to make a full proposal and then they go through the competitive grant process.

Councilman Smith said he did not have a problem with the \$50,000 grant, but he may be wrong and asked the City Attorney, when they get the Mayor to sign a letter of intent on anything he thought it was supposed to come through City Council to authorize the Mayor to sign stuff like that. Attorney Chichester said he believed if the Mayor was acting on any type of program like that it should come before City Council. Councilman Smith said he thought it was a surprise to all of City Council and they did not know anything about it until it came up. He stated he thought it was a good

thing and did not have any problems with it. He thinks Council needs to be informed a lot of times instead of just jumping into something and asking the Mayor to do something that Council hasn't approved. Main Street Director Caudle agreed and said in this particular case she was not aware there wasn't notification, but she also was not clear a letter of support needed a vote by City Council. Councilman Smith said she initiated it and asked how was she not aware. She said in this particular case, from what she understands, there may have been a breakdown in communication between what she was doing as Main Street to getting the City to do a letter of support. That became clear when they met with the Mayor to have that signed. She agreed and said if it is required to bring that to City Council, then that is what should have been done. If they are asked to do that again from that organization, if they are invited to be a semi-finalist, then it definitely needed to follow that procedure.

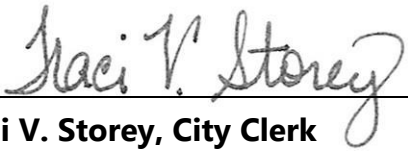
Mayor Doughtie stated he was still confused about what she said about a second round; it sounded like the City had partnered with another municipality or someone else. He asked if the City partnered with someone else who would decide where the money would actually end up going or would it possibly be split amongst ten projects.

Main Street Director Caudle explained the grant itself will be awarded to ten recipients throughout the state of North Carolina for up to \$50,000 apiece. So the applicant that applies for the grant which in this case is not the City or Main Street Roanoke Rapids, would be the one that is responsible for spending the funds if they were awarded those funds. The process itself required submission of a letter of intent so that organization did that. They had to have community partners assist in that project so Main Street Roanoke Rapids the non-profit which she also manages assisted them as part of that piece. With the letter of intent, they had to seek out letters of support so that is what the City did, sign a letter of support saying yes, we recognize the story and yes, we support moving forward with the grant if the grant committee selects it. Once they find out if they are selected, that same applicant which is not the City or Main Street would then have to go through a series of public meetings. That would be open to anybody and any community organization whether it is Main Street, the City or any other entity can participate in any capacity they see fit to work through that public round of community engagement sessions. From that they are supposed to deliver a full grant application that would state what the public art would be, where it would go and they are supposed to offer artists' renderings. They will submit their application late spring and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Committee would do a final review and select the ten communities that would get the art installation. The money itself much like the City did with the Kate B. Reynolds for Chaloner, it is up to the applicant to spend it according to what the grant guidelines state. Currently, the letter of intent is under review with Z. Smith Reynolds and she believes they are

supposed to hear between now and the end of November whether they would be allowed to submit a full application.

**Other Business/Council Comments**

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

  
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**Traci V. Storey, City Clerk**

**Approved by Council Action on: December 4, 2018**