



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, March 5, 2019 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)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director
Bobby Martin, Interim Police Chief
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Carol H. Cowen, Council Member

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, motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for March 5, 2019 as presented.

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Jerry McDaniel

Mr. McDaniel stated he wished he would have been here in time to save what happened to Weldon. Weldon has morphed from the “Rockfish Capital of the World” to the “Coal Ash Capital of the World.” By his math, there is 1,000 cubic yards of coal ash on the ground per person in Weldon. He wished he could have prevented it; he got into with the spill in Danville. He said he was worried about the people on River Road, he considers them to be ground zero for coal ash. Look at the river right now, the north side of the dam, he hopes the dam is not free-willing while our river is at flood stage. They have a lagoon down there that the NC Department of Environment & Natural Resources said everything was fine. The owners of Vista Green looked at it and said it was an earthen berm adjacent to and above the river; so what was he to believe. He asked what makes people in Danville, Virginia and the rest of the world raise Cain about coal ash, but what is it about Roanoke Rapids that they just don’t seem to get it. He sent a letter to his State Representative. It was not that he brought it up, it was that it was brought up. He did not understand why nobody has stood up to it, the fact that we have coal ash problems. He has gotten some mixed response from Shawn McKee with the NC Department of Environment & Natural Resources that said although one of the sites he took them to was already on a solid waste list. Then he received a response that all the sites he showed them were on the waste list and then he got a response that all but one of them were on the waste list. The second location for a permitted coal ash dump is 200 yards beyond the northern terminus of River Road North, Roanoke Rapids. There is a permitted flash disposal area approximately 1200 feet north of River Road on property owned by International Paper. That was like saying there was one coal ash pile next to another coal ash pile. This was two or three football fields upstream of three of our streets – some ask why he does not include Valley Drive. He thinks they should caution their children. Eric Morris, a former employee of NC Department of Environmental & Natural Resources, wrote, “I personally find it commendable that you would risk implicating yourself in the name of protecting people.” He said there was a grassroots effort to test the sediment in the river, so they were going to get to the bottom of it. People need to get their heads out of Michael Wray’s b*** and start paying attention to what’s going on about coal ash, because they are going to find out even if it’s three minutes at a time.

Councilman Smith stated he felt it was in order for Mr. McDaniel to apologize to the ladies in attendance for what he just finished saying. Council did not need that type of language at City Council meetings. Mr. McDaniel did not apologize.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to approve the February 19, 2019 Regular Meeting minutes as drafted.

City Council Appointments

City Clerk Storey said Donna Medlin had submitted an application to fill the vacancy on the Beautification Committee. The term for this seat will expire August 9, 2021. She announced City Council took a ballot vote earlier and Ms. Medlin received a unanimous vote to be appointed.

Motion was made by Councilman Bobbitt, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to appoint Ms. Medlin to the Beautification Committee.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer announced the Child Abuse Prevention March held on March 2nd in Centennial Park went well. Approximately 255-260 attended. Elijah Lee plans to make this an annual event.

He reported Severe Weather Awareness Week was this week, March 3-9th. As part of North Carolina's Severe Weather Preparedness Week, tomorrow, Wednesday, March 6th at 9:30 a.m. EST, the National Weather Service in cooperation with local broadcasters will conduct the annual statewide tornado drill in a form of a Required Monthly Test on all NOAA weather radio and public alert systems. The alarm test will activate the State Emergency Alert System and be carried by local radio broadcasters. This will allow schools, businesses, and residents the opportunity to practice their tornado drills and safety plans. Every school, business, workplace and family across the City is strongly encouraged to participate in the statewide tornado drill.

He said some months ago, we received a grant for the GIS mapping of our stormwater infrastructure system. The contractor has started the project and there is a map for you to see what has been done so far.

City Manager Scherer announced the new asphalt street repair truck has arrived. Public Works crews are doing some training with it on City streets and trying to get the method to make repairs smooth. The process uses two types of aggregate

depending on type of repair. It can repair pot holes, sunken old utility cuts and cracks. The vendor that is doing the antennae/cable repair for the tower behind City Hall dug up conduits yesterday. Repair work for the tower will be ongoing all week. Repairs also included new safety climbing steps on the tower.

He stated leaf season is wrapping up. They have collected leaves in all alleys and are now reaching out to social media to contact Public Works for any last leaf pick up. Now leaves can only be bagged for pickup.

He said the Planning & Development office is conducting several plan reviews including one for the Klaussner Lumber mill site in Enfield. We do so because we have a mutual aid agreement with the County.

City Manager Scherer announced a bats/rabies clinic will be held at Kirkwood Adams Community Center on April 11th in the evening. Halifax County Health Department is putting the clinic together with presenters from the State Health Department. This clinic will cover the different types of bats in the area and what level of government protection they have, as well as information on the rabies disease that bats can carry.

He said John Simeon has had his crew at Emry Park where they have taken out 43 trees so far with a few more to go. This will improve visibility of the area. Public Works will follow up with lighting upgrades, with lights inside the shelter as well as Dominion putting poles in overhead lines as opposed to underground. The cost is \$1,800 to put the two poles in. They are trying to set the circuit up so after installing lights in shelter and the two poles, they can decide if they want to go further with more lights/poles, possibly in next year's budget.

He reported the donated covered batting cages are to be delivered this week at Ledgerwood Field which need to be installed by the Parks & Recreation Department. The Library is hosting several workshops this month to include first aid/CPR, personal finance and a book sale. The Jo Story Senior Center Stew & Sandwich event was held last Thursday and was well attended with all the stew being sold or served. They sold 335 tickets. The Roanoke Canal Half Marathon registrations are going well. They have 40+ registered now and it is getting a lot of publicity.

He stated the Statewide Student Council meeting will be held at Roanoke Rapids High School on March 14, 15 and 16. Over 500 participants are expected to attend the event at the high school campus.

City Manager Scherer said this past weekend the CVS store was robbed, but officers

apprehended the suspect within 15 minutes.

He reported the Fire Department continues to work on its storage shed and training facility as weather permits. They will be conducting annual hose and truck pump testing this week.

He reported Ms. Caudle coordinated the presentation of two historic tax credit utilization workshops last week. The presenter was from the State Historic Preservation Office. Objective was to provide property owners, developers and real estate agents on how tax credits could be utilized to help fund historic property improvements or redevelopment.

He described the upcoming Shamrock Supper Stroll: The event involves five participating businesses along the Avenue where guests can interact personally with owners and experience dining including Shell Furniture, Mill City Market, Pepper and Doughtie's Antiques, The Renaissance Spa and Salon, Rivertown Consignments and the Halifax County Arts Council Gallery. Ms. Caudle said the concept will help raise funds for Main Street program, but is also a way to get the community to become aware of the businesses. Tickets are \$30 per person and \$55 per couple and sold at participating locations or by calling 252-533-2838. They are only selling 100 tickets total for the event and you can reserve dinner slots for 5 p.m., 6 p.m. or 7 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated it was a great march by Elijah Lee and KIPP at the park. It was mentioned that the first Saturday in March could be considered an Elijah Lee Day proclaimed by the City. He talked to them about coming before Council and soliciting that request so he wanted to put that on the books for Council to consider.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he fully agreed with the (Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Public Art Project) proposal 100%, but wanted to discuss it being located in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. There were already some items and upgrades that were due at the park and asked when they were looking at doing those. He knew they were in line with Chaloner and Martin Luther King. City Manager Scherer replied it was a three-phase project with those three parks to include Chaloner. Right now that was their next phase for the City to consider, but he could not tell him what year they would start that project.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he did not want this project to take away from what was planned; he would like it to be a compliment of Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. He knew the group doing it so he knows it will and he is in agreement with the

project. He said he brings this up not as an issue, but just as a comment to not do away with the plans they previously had for the park. City Manager Scherer replied that was why they were going to review the site with the group later this week and confirm where was the best place for the art project in consideration with all the other improvements so not to interfere with them.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said after the site meeting, he would like to bring that information back to the community before moving forward with it. City Manager Scherer stated he believed the group had two public meetings scheduled for the communities input about the project. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked City Manager Scherer to keep him posted on when those meetings would take place.

Other Business

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated several meetings ago, Mayor Doughtie made the statement that our town looked tired. She wanted to add to that. She thinks there are parts of town that look trashy because people ride along and throw out trash. She believes the only thing they can do as a Council is to encourage people to take pride in our town. She called upon Public Works Director Chalker to tell everyone what his department does to stay on top of this, to help the looks of Roanoke Rapids.

Public Works Director Chalker reported the department has been participating in a litter clean-up for a couple of months. He said city wide, the department has picked up 390, 55 gallon bags of trash and litter off of the public streets which equates to 5.10 tons of litter. Some areas where they have picked the litter up remain cleaner today, but there are some areas the litter problem is worse. Some areas of town within days will look like they have never been there. He stated they notice that in their job, in their duties and in their travels throughout town. He said it was disheartening to get a neighborhood cleaned up and within days it looks like they were never there.

He continued to say it was not just his department, it was a multifaceted approach. He and Interim Chief Martin have had discussions about litter. Again, they will need everyone's involvement from the citizens to law enforcement to the Public Works Department. There were some other areas where they can affect this. In the City's Code of Ordinances Title 9, Chapter 96 deals with specific nuisances that both he and the Police Department enforce. Minimum housing and planning and zoning get involved at different levels of this; they sort of overlap each other.

He said some of the things Public Works covers in Chapter 96 is: refuse, litter, building materials and worn out appliances that are left in the yard. He said the appliances are covered in two areas. They could just be strewn out in the yard or it could be a refrigerator or freezer with the door still on it that a child could get trapped in. They updated that ordinance 5-7 years ago because they felt there was a need because there are documented cases throughout the U.S. where children get trapped in appliances left outside on front porches, decks and yards.

He continued to list: junk or waste materials, noxious or uncontrolled growth, weeds and grass. This is one of the main areas Public Works addresses because when someone does not cut their grass, they give them 10 days' notice when they find out about it. If they do not cut it, then Public Works sends out crews to cut it for them. There is a \$250 administrative fee then there is labor involved. The average bill is \$330 to cut somebody's grass. He said dangerous outbuildings and structures that are less than 144 square feet. Small out buildings are covered by Public Works while the larger ones are covered by minimum housing. When they fall into disrepair one of the two departments are going to be there and when they need assistance, the Police Department may be there as well. Their job is to try and abate the situation and to bring it back into control. He said if someone has a poorly maintained fence and it is falling down – they take care of that.

Public Works Director Chalker said the list goes on and on so he hopes that answers some of her question. They continue to try to get the litter up and make a positive impact on that. He stated if they can get it from being thrown out of the window of the moving vehicle that would help them a lot.

Councilwoman Scarbrough wanted to congratulate each department for trying to keep the city clean and knows they all work at it diligently. She has also found out that some of the property that the trash was on was owned by people that do not even live in North Carolina; she thinks that presents a problem. She asked if we know who they are, can they get in touch with them. Is there an ordinance that helps with something like that.

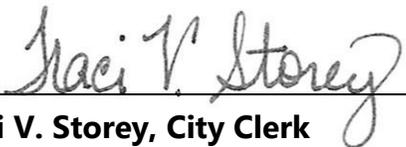
City Manager Scherer replied they did and are able to reach out to them, but the hard part is getting a response from those living out of state. Again, at some point in time the City may have to take legal action against them to get their attention.

Councilman Smith asked for a status report on updating the City Ordinances. City Manager Scherer said they had received the first draft last week from the company so staff will try to go through it and point out any issues and concerns. Then they will get back with the company and they will provide a final draft to review and see

what parts need to bring before City Council to adopt for improvement or to bring the ordinances current to State and Federal codes.

Councilman Smith stated he would like to see the fines increased. He believed right now there was a \$50 fine if someone throws out rubbish and \$100 if they throw it out on public land, water etc. He said if the City increased the fines and put something on the street letting violators know if they get caught, they are going to get fined. He hopes while they are working on the ordinances, they were working on something about the broken windows on the Avenue and getting some of the plywood off the windows and making them put glass back in it. City Manager Scherer replied they were working on those.

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: March 19, 2019