



# **Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council**

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, April 16, 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  
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director  
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager  
Bobby Martin, Interim Police Chief  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Wes Hux, Deputy Fire Chief  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

**Absent:** Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director  
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order. Prior to offering an invocation, he asked for a moment of silence in memory of Councilwoman Carol Cowen who passed away on April 15, 2019.

## **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 Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to adopt the business agenda for April 16, 2019 as presented.

## Special Recognitions

### **Kelvin Rivers' Retirement**

Public Works Director Chalker asked Street Superintendent Wayne Medlin to join him since Mr. Rivers had not arrived yet. He said Kelvin Rivers was a Street Department employee that just retired. He started with the City of Roanoke Rapids February 2, 1988 and retired February 28, 2019. He retired as a Senior Equipment Operator with 31 years of service. He said you hate to have a favorite employee, but Kelvin, who they affectionately call "Chubby," was one of his favorites. He is back working for the City part-time and presented the plaque to Mr. Medlin to accept on Mr. Rivers' behalf.

## Public Comment (Unscheduled)

### **Dr. Charles E. McCollum**

Dr. McCollum expressed his sympathy for the loss of Councilwoman Cowen and commended Council on the consideration they were giving for the proposal concerning Sarah Keys Evans. He said they want to commemorate her historic stand back in 1952. They were asking for their consideration to use Martin Luther King Jr. Park as the site for the project. He noted the project itself is ongoing. Z. Smith Reynolds is the foundation that was funding it which would be a plus for the City because it would not be at the City's expense nor the upkeep going forward. The significance in terms of what this woman did by her unlikely historic stand which was not planned nor orchestrated. She left Trenton, New Jersey on the way home to Washington, North Carolina. She was told if she boarded a bus in the north, she could continue that bus ride all the way through. To her rude awakening when she got to Roanoke Rapids turned out to be something different. She actually gave up her seat to another marine – she was in uniform as she was a soldier. She did not refuse to give up because she understood the social mores. She thought she was comfortable where she was and it ended up getting her in dyer straights. What was so significant was we point out some of the firsts of North Carolina: First for Freedom, First in Flight with Kitty Hawk and this too was an opportunity to highlight a first even before Rosa Parks. He said Rosa Parks received all the glory for the civil rights struggle – the movement. This woman was an unsung hero whose time has come. They are grateful for the consideration of the partners including the Mayor and other members of this deliberative body who joined in to say this was something worthwhile that could be historic in terms of tourism and all that it would bring to the county and to the city because it happened right here in Roanoke Rapids. She was housed right across the street. And then to think she is still living, she is a living legacy. She will celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month. She has never been back to Roanoke Rapids since that incident happened and they are hoping this might bring her back to this area to help her

celebrate what she has accomplished. The Supreme Court upheld what had already been decided that interstate travel for anybody was legal coming all the way through. Rosa Parks benefited from that and all the others benefited from what she had done. He thanked City Council for the consideration that they have given to this honorable and worthy cause that could bring significance in terms of the history of this woman and the city. Again, we are going to end up with prominence in terms of saying we were part of the first that made some things happen that was coming. It happened right here and we want to celebrate that.

### **Approval of Council Minutes**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the April 2, 2019 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as drafted.

### **City Council Appointments**

#### **Canal Museum Advisory Committee**

City Clerk Storey said the terms of Gail Biesecker and Tina Gregory (Arts Council Representative) on the Canal Museum Advisory Committee will expire on April 30, 2019. Ms. Gregory has served the maximum number of 2 consecutive terms allowed by City policy. Council has the authority – and has done so in the past – to waive this section of the policy.

She stated Thomas Merritt III notified the City that he was no longer working for the school district, therefore he could not continue to serve as the School District Representative. Jeff White has been nominated to represent the school district replacing Mr. Merritt. Lastly, Steven Green has submitted an application for your consideration to be appointed to the Canal Museum Advisory Committee.

She noted that although a ballot vote is not required for Tina Gregory and Jeff White, as these appointments are not At-Large Member appointments, a ballot vote was taken for Mrs. Biesecker and Mr. Green and they both received a unanimous vote. She requested City Council consider a motion to waive the City policy for Ms. Gregory and reappoint Ms. Gregory and Ms. Biesecker and to appoint Mr. Green and Mr. White to the Canal Museum Advisory Committee.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to waive the City Policy for Ms. Gregory and reappoint Ms. Gregory and Ms. Biesecker and to appoint Mr. Green and Mr. White to the Canal Museum Advisory Committee.

### **Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board**

City Clerk Storey said the term for Terry Campbell on the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board as an ETJ member will expire on June 1, 2019. Mr. Campbell has served the maximum number of two consecutive terms allowed by City policy. Council has the authority – and has done so in the past – to waive this section of the policy.

She noted a ballot vote is not required for this reappointment, therefore I respectfully request Council consider a motion to waive the City Policy and recommend to the Halifax County Board of Commissioners the reappointment of Mr. Campbell to the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to waive the City Policy and recommend to the Halifax County Board of Commissioners the reappointment of Mr. Terry Campbell to the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board.

<b>New Business</b>
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### **Proposal for Placement of Sarah Keys Evans Public Art Project in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park**

Main Street Director Caudle stated further to Reverend McCollum comments during Unscheduled Comment, they were here today to present to City Council the placement of the Sarah Keys Evans public art project in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

She said back in December 2018, the applicant, Eastern Carolina Christian College and Seminary (ECCCS) was notified they were a semifinalist for the Z. Smith Reynolds Inclusive Art Grant opportunity for their proposed Sarah Keys Evans art project. Z. Smith Reynolds will award up to ten projects a maximum award of \$50,000 with no required match. ECCCS as the applicant submitted their final application April 5, 2019 and the grant foundation will notify the grant winners in late May and the grant cycle is June 2019 – June 2020. In March, the applicant requested to locate the Sarah Keys Evans public art project in the City's Martin Luther King Jr. Park and there was some preliminary discussion including a site visit to discuss where they were proposing to locate their art project. From those discussions, she believed Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee encouraged the applicant to host a community engagement meeting with the surrounding neighborhood that we refer to as Hodgestown. They did just that on March 14, 2019 and the community members who were in attendance that evening approved of locating the art project in Martin Luther King Jr. Park. The applicant has done a series, a total of four, community engagement meetings throughout the county. From that they developed a concept of a Sarah Keys Evans public art plaza. They worked with an engineer, Jim Miller who is here tonight, to develop a preliminary

design plan that included two semi-circular, six-foot brick walls that would house a visual time line through mini-murals to depict the story of Sarah Keys Evans. Main Street Director Caudle showed renderings via PowerPoint and said on wall one, they will see an artist's rendering, they have hired Napoleon Hill to develop this, with four panels that are 36 inches wide by 48 inches tall. This will go on a six-foot tall brick semi-circular wall with concrete decorative capping. Each mural will be a one-shot mural paint with anti-graffiti and UVA protectant coatings on aluminum metal boards that are completely sealed and permanently mounted to these walls. The two panels that do not have any panels will be cast bronzed plaques. The first one is a text narrative of the Sarah Keys Evans story and the final plaque will basically be an acknowledgment of partners or a thank you for everyone that made the project possible. With their grant budget they are able to do all of the brick wall construction including the land grading, art creation and per Mr. Hill's recommendation, re-varnishing at years 5 and 10 to prolong the life of the public art.

Also via PowerPoint, Parks & Recreation Director Simeon presented a map of the park and said the placement of the proposed public art project will face Virginia Avenue and would be next to White Street in Martin Luther King Jr. Park. He noted it was offset from the center of the park and the Martin Luther King Jr. statue. He showed the map of the 158 Corridor Master Plan that was done a few years ago that included Martin Luther King Jr. Park along with Chaloner Recreation Center and Wheeler Park. He stated staff feels this public art project would fit in nicely with this concept. It will be next to some of the trees there in the park.

Councilman Smith asked if this location had been approved by the citizens that want this done. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee replied it has been. He said there were a series of meetings held throughout the community including one in the area where the project would be located and they were all in agreement with that location.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to approve the placement of the Sarah Keys Evans public art project in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

### **Designation of Voting Delegate and Alternate for the 2019 Annual NC League Business Meeting**

City Manager Scherer stated each year a representative from the City attends the Annual Conference for the NC League of Municipalities. This year Mayor Doughtie and Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee will be attending the conference in Hickory, NC, May 14-16, 2019. The annual NC League Business Meeting will be held during the conference and a voting delegate and alternate needs to be designated by City Council.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to designate Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee as the City's voting delegate and Mayor Doughtie as the alternate for the 2019 annual NC League business meeting.

### City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer highlighted a few bills that have been introduced in the General Assembly that could have an impact on Roanoke Rapids.

He said HB 399, Historic Preservation Act of 2019, which would enhance and extend the state's historic tax credit. It cleared the House Commerce Committee last week and will now be considered by the House Finance Committee. The House committee's action came as the Senate filed a bill that includes a provision that extends the tax credit for four years, potentially signaling that Senate leadership may not push back against the idea of the extension, even as differences may arise over the term of the extension and any changes to the tax credit.

He stated next is SB 619 Law Enforcement Agency Recordings, which if passed would achieve a statewide goal of cities and towns. It would make several changes to the existing laws on the release and disclosure of law enforcement agency recordings, including allowing the release or disclosure to possibly the city manager, city council, or a citizen review board if there is a confidentiality agreement and it is done in closed session.

City Manager Scherer reported a bill filed in the House this week would mandate a two-day turnaround time for local officials to review residential building plans submitted under the seal of an engineer or architect. If submitted by other persons and not under seal, the timeframe for completing the plan review would be five days. Our Planning & Development Department reviews residential building plans to ensure proper design along with compliance with safety and zoning codes. This extremely short time frame for plan review and approval will put these community safety standards in jeopardy. This provision was included in an omnibus building inspection bill, HB 675 2019 Building Code Regulatory Reform, which includes numerous other measures that affect local building inspection processes:

- Directs creation of a standardized form to certify third party inspections of various building components or elements.
- Prohibits cities from requiring developers to bury power lines under specifically-listed circumstances.

- Prohibits cities from requiring minimum square footage for residential structures.
- Exempts temporary structures related to motion picture, television, and theatre stage sets from building permitting processes.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he has a question relating to SB 619. Is it correct that currently there is no release to the city council or board of a confidential item to include film or police cameras? City Manager Scherer replied that was correct and referred the question to Attorney Chichester.

Attorney Chichester stated the way he understands it is that if the bill is passed it will accomplish what many law enforcement agencies and cities have been asking for. It would make disclosure of certain recordings and release different, but it would also allow it be released to city managers, city councils and agencies of that manner. He has called several city attorneys in other locations and they favor this and have filed documents with the legislature asking for it to be passed. So it seems to be well supported.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if there was going to be a time frame on the release. City Attorney Chichester replied he did not believe it would be just left wide open. He believes when the final bill would pass it would have a time frame or certain criteria that would determine what the time frame would be.

### **Finance Director's Report**

Finance Director Etheridge gave the following financial report for the month ending March 31, 2019. She reported the operating statement for the month of March shows the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$13,486,991. The percentage of actual monies collected of adopted budgeted figures total 73.9%. General Fund year to date expenditures totaled \$12,719,991. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures total 69.7%. After the month of March, 75.05% of the budget year has been completed. As a result, year to date revenues exceeded expenditures by \$766,999.91.

She said during the month of March, the City received: Third Quarter Utility Franchise Taxes, Ad Valorem & Solid Waste Tax Revenue and Sales & Use Taxes for the service month of January.

Finance Director Etheridge noted the City still has debt service requirements upcoming for the Series 2017A and 2017B loan repayments. We all have to be mindful

with day-to-day expenditures going into 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to remain favorable to budget as we end the fiscal year. This is the time of fiscal year where we need to decrease our spending levels.

Councilman Smith asked what the payment was for the Series 2017A and 2017B loan. She replied \$266,000 a quarter for both combined.

Mayor Doughtie said he heard about the revenues that had come in and then the payments for the 2017A and 2017B loan and asked if there were any large income payments coming in and how were they doing for the rest of the year. Finance Director Etheridge replied they would basically have the month-to-date ad valorem revenue which typically wanes into last quarter. They will also have one more quarter for the fourth installment of the Utility Franchise tax. That is why they always say to hold off on any expenditures that can wait until July because the City receives less revenue and opportunity to make up any deficits if they should see them.

Councilman Smith asked if the City was about at the same place they were last year or better off. She replied they were slightly better than they were last year. March 2018 year-to-date excess revenues over expenditures was \$435,452.

Mayor Doughtie stated they are seeing some advantage to the refinancing on the Theatre and also not having to pay the utility bills and those type bills on that property.

Councilman Smith stated he believed the thing that was helping this year was the City Manager and the City Department Heads. They have done a very good job at managing money and he appreciates what they do for the City.

## **Departmental Reports**

### **Human Resources**

Human Resources Manager Kearney presented the March report. They are currently advertising for an Equipment Mechanic for Public Works in the garage and have 3 Police Officer openings. The department received 4 applications for PT Public Works Worker and 5 applications for Lifeguard positions. They have filled all the Lifeguard positions they had. They hired one full-time person March 25<sup>th</sup>, Chad Kinney who works in the Street Maintenance Department.

She announced Open Enrollment for benefits for City employees will be on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at Kirkwood Adams. She reported the Lloyd Andrews memorial donations to BARC totaled \$510. This would help fund at least one scholarship this year. They are taking scholarship applications now for City employees who have children that will be graduating and attending college this year.

## **Police**

Interim Police Chief Martin presented the department's March report. He reported the three positions they have open at the Police Department, he currently has leads on several certified Police Officers. One potentially plans to return back to work for the department and there are other certified officers seeking employment with the City. He stated he hopes to at least close two of the three open positions.

He said recently he was patrolling the area around 11:30 p.m. to 12 a.m. and went to Emry Park. He noted since the new lighting has been installed, the park is very well lit. It has done a great job keeping individuals out of there that were committing crimes and using drugs in that area. He thanked Public Works Director Chalker, Public Works and the Parks & Recreation department for helping out with that because they were receiving quite a few citizen complaints.

Interim Police Chief Martin announced they have received their last patrol vehicle so they should start seeing the new patrol vehicles out on the road. They are looking forward to transitioning the new marked vehicles in and the old ones out.

He said they would hold their Summer Camp for kids June 17-21, 2019 at T.J. Davis Recreation Center. He invited Council to come out and visit the kids, they will be there from 9:30 a.m. to lunch time. He announced they were preparing for National Night Out that will be held August 6<sup>th</sup> at Halifax Community College in the Centre. He invited City Council to come out.

Interim Police Chief Martin reported Matt Hunsucker started K-9 training this week with the department's new K-9 Dubai. Hopefully in about a month they will have another K-9 Officer and a K-9 on patrol with the City. They are working on a couple more in the future to make sure they have one for every squad.

## **Planning & Development**

Planning & Development Director Lasky was absent. No report was given.

## **Parks & Recreation**

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon presented the March report. He called attention to the beginning of his departmental report they will see comments from the Senior Center patrons. He encouraged them to read the comments because they give excellent feedback on what the Senior Center means to them. He stated he was very proud of Thomas Goble and all the efforts of the staff there. They are some impressive comments on what the center means to the patrons and how much it impacts their lives.

He announced the library will be closed on April 22<sup>nd</sup> for a staff development day. The new State Librarian, Timothy Owens, is planning to attend and assist with library training that afternoon. The Senior Center Easter celebration will be this Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at Kirkwood Adams and the Roanoke Valley Aging Expo will be next Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup> beginning at 9 a.m. at Kirkwood Adams.

He reported youth softball began the regular season last night at Chockoyotte Park. There was a small ceremony prior to the opening pitch for the new concession stand. Things are going really well out there for youth softball. Youth baseball begins its regular season at Ledgerwood Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. The Cal Ripken Eastern Regional Baseball Tournament the City has hosted before with teams coming from Tennessee to Florida is scheduled for July 16 – 21<sup>st</sup>. He will give more information as the event gets closer.

He said Chaloner Recreation Center is still moving forward. Site grading has been completed and they are scheduled for the installation of the splash pad and playground equipment to begin the first week of May. He was not sure if they will do those consecutively or one at a time. With all the rain the installers are running behind but when talking with the company, he is hoping they come in two groups and put them in at the same time. He will keep them informed but he was pushing them to get the installation done in a timely fashion.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked in the event they would come out in separate settings, would that push the date out. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied not to his knowledge. There was still going to be paving that needs to be done and concrete work along with the basketball multi-purpose court. They were hoping to get those two items completed and then the rest is just a turnkey job by Rightmyer at that point. He was comfortable about where they were at this point.

### **Public Works**

Public Works Director Chalker presented the report for the month of March. He said the department continues to use the new machine to work on pot holes. They are getting better at making those repairs. They received 114 calls of service, but that by no means is every call they get; they are just the ones they log and create specific work orders for. They are at the time of year when grass cutting season is coming into full swing. All hands on deck are cutting grass. They are not sending out nuisance abatement letters out just yet for tall grass. They are trying to allow people to get their lawnmowers in shape. They have sent them out in the past early on and people complain so they are trying to give everybody a chance to do the right thing. By next month, the letters will be going out in full force.

Public Works Director Chalker acknowledged Kelvin Rivers who just retired after 31 years of service with the City. He stated he was as much like his family than anybody else. When he started with the City in 2009, the first time he saw Kelvin or Chubby as they call him, he was pretty intimidating to him. Kelvin might have played a couple of practical jokes on him but they have had a long wonderful time working together. He feels like Kelvin has always been in his corner and told him he really appreciated him.

### **Fire**

Deputy Fire Chief Wes Hux gave the March report. The department responded to 150 calls. Total property damage was \$26,350 with the total estimated value of property, contents and vehicles protected where actual damage occurred was \$105,500. Firemen were engaged in 625.5 man-hours of training with 257.50 hours of that in specialized training. They conducted 21 fire prevention inspections and completed 4 plan reviews for proposed new businesses/renovations. They held a CPR class at the Library for thirteen employees. They attended a Fire Safety-Morse Clinic that was next door to the Fire Station. He and Deputy Fire Marshall Butts attended NC Fire Prevention School in Wilmington for a week. The department continues to work on the shed and training prop which they got good use of last week. City Manager Scherer actually lit the first fire for them.

He said there was an article in the newspaper recently about particulate blocking fire hoods they were trying to purchase. Fortunately someone that saw the article made a donation of a little over \$2,500 which will buy a hood for each of the firemen. They hope they will be able to buy another hood through the budget so they will have two.

### **Main Street**

Main Street Director Caudle presented her monthly report. She updated City Council on the Streetscape/Resurfacing project. She said they completed the small section of resurfacing from the Gaston Bridge to Roanoke Avenue/Washington Street Extension. They did that in conjunction with CSX replacing the rail crossing at Roanoke Avenue in front of the paper mill's entrance. They did that at the beginning of the month and feels it was a good exercise for the City because with the remainder of NC 48 resurfacing quickly approaching, they learned a lot from those couple days in regards to detours and a few other things they can apply when they do the rest of the Avenue.

As of today, there has been some ADA concrete work occurring on NC 48 past the southern entrance which is the junction of the district and she assumes they will be coming down the Avenue from south to north first. This ADA compliant crosswalk project is using Federal DOT funds and they are installing or retrofitting curb ramps

to current ADA compliance for our district at every intersection from 14<sup>th</sup> to past 1<sup>st</sup> Street. At the completion of the project, every intersection along Roanoke Avenue and some on 10<sup>th</sup> Street as well in the district will have those ADA compliant ramps. While they are here, they will also be doing the concrete work for the mid-block crossing between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets. She did not have specific dates within this project that they will be doing the mid-block crossing work, but as soon as she knows she will inform City Council and the general public. The contractor has until the end of July to complete the work but they have been informed they will probably focus on NC 48 first for the curb ramping so then they can come back and reschedule the resurfacing project. Once they have those dates with Rose Brothers, they will inform them of that but they have to be complete by the end of this calendar year.

She reported they had a very successful Public Works appreciation dinner last Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup>. They were able to feed steaks to 18 Public Works employees which is just a small token of their appreciation for what they did at 1026 Roanoke Avenue. Several Main Street Board members were there and they actually cooked steaks to order. They had a great time and it was a beautiful day so thanks to those who helped with that. She thanked Public Works again for all their hard work they did there over the past few years. She said 1026 Roanoke Avenue is such a great space for events such as that. They are working through some programming and 1026 will be a stop at the next Supper Stroll which they have scheduled for June 21<sup>st</sup>. They will be finalizing those details over the next couple of weeks and then they will roll out that information to the public. She noted June 21<sup>st</sup> is the longest day of the year, it is the first day of summer, so they might as well celebrate with a stroll down the Avenue.

Main Street Director Caudle said they did have some business district activity. At 1025 Roanoke Avenue, Gee's Florist's soft opening tentative date will be May 3<sup>rd</sup>. They are working with the local chamber for a ribbon cutting but that is the week before Mother's Day so as she gets more information she will share it. She encouraged everyone to support them and all the business along the Avenue.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Other Business/Closed Session</b></p>
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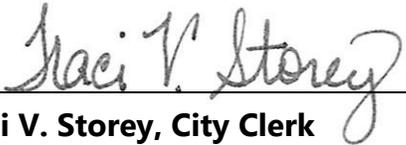
Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to go into Closed Session to consult with the City Attorney on Personnel and Legal Matters as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3).

*Minute Book Pages 19435 - 19438 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.*

**Open Session/Adjournment**

City Council returned to Open Session. No action was taken.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

  
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**Traci V. Storey, City Clerk**

**Approved by Council Action on: May 7, 2019**