



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 15, 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
Bobby Martin, Police Chief
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Wayne Medlin, Street Superintendent
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Absent: Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Larry Chalker, Public Works 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 October 15, 2019 as presented.

Approval of Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the October 1, 2019 Regular Council Meeting Minutes and October 10, 2019 Special Council Meeting Minutes as drafted.

New Business

Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau Annual Report

Ms. Lori Medlin, President and CEO of the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau gave a presentation on the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Annual Report. She stated their job was to promote the tourism industry in Halifax County and promote awareness of the importance of the industry.

She reported their primary funding comes from 5% room tax that is paid by visitors when they stay overnight in our hotels. No local tax dollars are used in their efforts whatsoever. In addition to the 5% countywide room tax, the City of Roanoke Rapids has a 1% occupancy tax dedicated to the marketing and tourism development for Roanoke Rapids. They administer those funds. The Roanoke Rapids Occupancy Tax budget last year was \$152,000. They actually bought in \$155,000 and spent that much. They work every year with the City Manager and he sends requests of things he would like them to do with those funds and so far they have worked very well together and get all the goals accomplished. Last year they spent funds on the following:

\$8,000	Canal Museum Operations
\$2,000	Canal Trail Maintenance
\$5,000	Roanoke Avenue Promotions
\$20,000	Interchange/Wayfinding Program
\$45,000	Marketing and Advertising
\$31,000	Logo Campaign (billboard campaign for hotels)
\$15,000	Security at hotels in Roanoke Rapids
\$29,000	Chockoyotte Park Concession Stand

Ms. Medlin highlighted the following in her report:

- Visitor spending was up 4.6% last year at \$101.45M in Halifax County.
- 570 people are directly employed in the travel and tourism industry with 1,000 people employed indirectly in Halifax County.
- State tax revenue in Halifax County totaled \$6.23M.
- \$2.48M in local taxes were generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel supported businesses.
- Visitor spending in Halifax County saved each resident taxpayer \$169.59 in taxes.
- The HCCVB received top honors statewide this year from the NC Travel Industry Association. They won the *Platinum Award for Marketing Achievement in Leisure Marketing* and the *Best in Show Award* for innovative campaign, "Are we there

yet?” that included the build of the Visitor Center Dog Run and the marketing digital and print and billboard media that went along with that.

- Website VisitHalifax.com received 116,481 visitors last year which was up 31.7%.
- States that visited the website: New York - 28.33% sends the most followed by NC - 26.69%. Desktop computers still send the most visitors to the website followed by mobile and tablet.
- Visitors can subscribe to their Newsletter from the website.
- Tried something new called geo targeting which feeds ads to cell phones as they come within travel distance of Roanoke Rapids. They tracked nearly 4,000 visits directly to hotel parking lots from that ad campaign. They will continue that campaign.
- Influencer Visits – This is people that have social media digital platforms of their own. They brought two in this year to spend weekends here in Halifax County and write stories about us. This was very effective.
- They also run a sister website huntfishnc.com. This site lists fishing and hunting guides, seasons and regulations. It received 2,184 visitors last year.
- HCCVB is Halifax County’s local connection to VisitNC.com which provides addition exposure at the state level.
- Social media continues to be a priority in marketing. They have a tremendous amount of followers. They put over 2 million impressions on *Facebook* last year.
- Billboards speak for their largest audience. They reached over 92 million impressions last year.
- Print advertising still remains very important.
- They are partner in promoting Roanoke Rapids as a retirement designation through a program called RetireNC.
- Sponsored Customer Service Training classes in partnership with HCC and Halifax Economic Development Commission.
- Helped sponsor the Roanoke Canal Half Marathon.
- Created the Wayfinding package and worked closely with the City’s Parks & Recreation and Public Works Department to get the signs put up.
- They do the Roanoke Valley Rocks Program and 12 new fish will be coming up in the area soon. They will also do a fish for the Jo Story Senior Center.
- Funded a Feasibility Study and marketing at Exit 173 in Weldon.
- Working with Halifax County, the City and Halifax Horizons to fund a Best Use Study of Exit 171. Working with company called The Retail Coach to do study.
- Partnered with Halifax County Economic Development Commission, Halifax County and Town of Weldon towards securing an Amtrak passenger stop in Weldon.
- Attraction Visitation: Medoc Mountain – 115,398, Roanoke Canal Museum – 25,101, Historic Halifax – 24,882, Sylvan Heights – 56,686 and Cryptozoology

& Paranormal Museum in Littleton – 28,962, Dog Run – 32,501 and the Visitor Center – 22,722.

- Presenting organization for Halifax County Underground Railroad Trail. They operate through audio tours at the three sites with one being at the Roanoke Canal Museum. New mural at the museum that depicts some of that story.

She introduced the HCCVB staff and Board of Directors who were in attendance.

Ms. Medlin showed a new piece they were doing in Our State Magazine for December and it leads with unique shopping in Roanoke Rapids. They believe Roanoke Avenue is up and coming and will have a real draw for visitation with some of the creative shops there now and the new restaurant that will be opening. They are excited about what is happening on Roanoke Avenue and all the hard work the City has put into it with our Main Street Director.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated all these things are just great and the new thing she is so fond of are the wayfinding signs. They are beautiful at night and are very helpful. Ms. Medlin said they plan to do more of those moving forward. She and Parks & Recreation Director Simeon will be meeting tomorrow about new signs on the Canal Trail.

Councilman Smith thanked Ms. Medlin for the effort she puts in to promote Roanoke Rapids and Halifax County. He thinks she is doing a good job and to keep it up. He noted Cathy Scott was in attendance and she has a lot to do in helping Roanoke Rapids and Halifax County as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated as the saying goes, “Working Together Works.”

Consideration of Amendment to the Personnel Policy (Stand-by Pay)

Police Chief Martin presented an amendment to the Personnel Policy. He stated uniformed officers work longer shifts than “non-exempt employees”, meaning the detectives. They are asking for an additional 1.25 hours of stand-by pay as a benefit to make the policy consistent across the divisions and fair for all law enforcement staffing. He said right now everyone gets 4 hours of on-call pay. Detectives work a 40 hour week, give or take, depending what is going on while officers on patrol work 12 hour shifts which puts them on call longer. They are requesting a change to this section of the policy by adding 5.25 hours stand-by pay for uniformed officers only. He asked for City Council to consider the following resolution amending the Personnel Policy:

RESOLUTION NO. 2019.10
Resolution to Amend
City of Roanoke Rapids Personnel Policy

Whereas, the Mayor and City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids, recognizing the importance of its municipal employees in meeting the service needs of the City residents, adopted Resolution No. 2007.21 which adopted the current Personnel Policy; and

Whereas, it has been necessary over the years to amend the City's Personnel Policy by City Council action; and

Whereas, uniformed patrol officers work longer shifts than "non-exempt employees," an amendment is being proposed to increase the stand-by pay as a benefit to make the policy consistent across the divisions and fair for all Law Enforcement staffing; and

Whereas, an amendment is being proposed to amend Article III, Section 11 of the City of Roanoke Rapids Personnel Policy to read as follows:

Stand-by. Non-exempt employees required to be on "stand-by" duty will be paid for four (4.0) hours of work for each week for detectives (approximately 128 hours {(7 x 24) - 40}), excluding work time) of stand-by time they serve. In addition, uniformed patrol officers will be paid for five and one-quarter hours (5.25) stand-by pay compensation. Stand-by compensation for less than one full week shall be determined by the ratio of .023 hours of pay per one hours of stand-by time. Hours actually worked while on stand-by are calculated beginning when the employee reports to the work site and are added to the regular total of hours worked for the week. Stand-by time is defined as that time when an employee must remain near an established (land line) telephone.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Roanoke Rapids City Council approves the foregoing amendment to the City of Roanoke Rapids Personnel Policy as presented to Council on October 15, 2019, to become effective immediately.

Adopted this 15th day of October, 2019.

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if calculations had been done and if the City has funds to take care of this change. Finance Director Etheridge replied yes, it is very minimal

and nominal to payroll expenditures because it is only an additional 1.25 hours for the uniform patrol division. With the scheduling, many of these officers actually take that as comp time.

Mayor Doughtie asked to explain what the 5.25 hours was. Chief Martin explained that right now everyone gets a standard 4 hours for being on-call whether you are a detective or a uniform officer. The 1.25 hours is what they are requesting to add so it will be a total of 5.25 hours for the officers.

Councilman Smith asked if this met some type of federal requirement. Chief Martin replied yes it does; it is part of the labor law.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adopt Resolution No. 2019.10 amending Article III, Section 11 – Stand-by Pay of the Roanoke Rapids Personnel Policy.

Consideration of Agreement with the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District to Lease Tennis Courts

City Manager Scherer said City elected and administration officials have been in discussions with the Roanoke Rapids School Board regarding trying to find a workable solution to providing adequate tennis courts for both the high school's tennis teams and the community. They have reached a consensus where by the City will lease the four tennis courts behind TJ Davis Recreation Center to the school board. They will then accomplish the construction of four new courts there. They will cover the costs of the project upfront and the City will reimburse them one half of the project's costs over the next two fiscal years. Currently, Attorney Chichester and the school board's attorney are working together to draft the agreement for both parties to review and sign for this project and future use of the courts. We will present the agreement to City Council once it is prepared and reviewed by us. As the agreement has not been finalized, he asked City Council to table the motion regarding the agreement approval until the next council meeting when he feels certain that it will be ready for their review and approval.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked City Manager Scherer the reason it was not ready. City Manager Scherer replied the two attorneys have not finalized the agreement yet.

Councilman Smith asked if City Council could make a tentative agreement to agree on this pending the attorneys reaching an agreement.

Attorney Chichester replied yes if that is what the City Council decided to do. He thinks the outline of this has been agreed to by the Roanoke Rapids Graded School

Board and Mr. Carlisle is in attendance and could address any question that City Council may have. The Halifax County Commissioners also have to weigh in on it and a resolution has been prepared that he received today which he believes the County Commissioners will take up next week at their meeting. The indication is they will probably approve it, but that has not been decided yet. The guidelines for the agreement have already been worked out. It provides for a 15 year lease for \$1 per year and provides for the costs of the repair work and how that is to be divided up. The documents that are envisioned between the school board attorney and himself are the resolution with the County which would also be a joint use agreement defining how the City, city residents and the school are to share the tennis courts plus a lease agreement and a note where the City would sign for their one-half to be paid in certain increments. He said if City Council decided they wanted to approve the agreement subject to the attorneys working out the details, it would not become final until that is done, reviewed and signed off on.

Mayor Doughtie stated he believed it was on a tight time schedule.

Attorney Chichester said considering there are four different documents and a draft version of those have been completed in a very short time period. He has a copy with him tonight. The bulk of the details have already been worked out between the City and the RRGSB and the County attorney. It is just a matter of finalizing the details.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to have an agreement with the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District and the City, pending both the attorney's agreement to come back before City Council and it be in the resolution to the County Board that we move forward with this.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer stated in two short weeks, the holiday season begins with Halloween Trick or Treat. Then before we know it, Thanksgiving is upon us and Christmas and New Year's Eve follows right after that. Right now, I'm sure holiday safety is the last thing on most peoples' radar. That is why I want to bring it to our community's attention.

He said kids love the magic of Halloween: Trick-or-Treating, classroom parties and trips to the neighborhood haunted house. But for moms and dads, often there is a fine line between Halloween fun and safety concerns, especially when it comes to road and pedestrian safety. Here's a scary statistic: Children are more than twice as likely to be hit by a car and killed on Halloween than any other day of the year. The Trunk

or Treat events being offered at TJ Davis, Doyle Field, Chaloner Recreation Center, as well as some local churches, are ideal ways to help children have a safe and fun Halloween.

He said when it comes to the Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year's holidays, most of us look forward to a long holiday weekend as a chance to take off work and enjoy time with friends and family. We associate these holidays with warm feelings of tradition – from eating a lot of great food to parties to reconnecting with loved one we don't see often enough. Unfortunately, these holiday periods also are associated with an uptick in car crashes resulting in serious injury and death. Many Americans embark on trips during the holidays, and the car – which has the highest fatality rate per passenger mile of any major form of transportation – is one of the most popular modes of travel. Because the holidays often involve celebrations with alcohol, fatal motor-vehicle crashes attributed to impaired driving also increase. Our Police Department will be extra vigilant during this time to try to keep impaired drivers off our streets.

City Manager Scherer stated along with vehicle safety, the Fire Department cautions everyone to be aware of those items and activities that cause serious injury and can ruin a family holiday in minutes. Examples of these are: keeping live Christmas trees well-watered and keeping all trees away from heat sources such as fireplaces and radiators; turn off all lights and decorations when going to bed and follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket.

He reported Thanksgiving Day is one of the busiest days for firefighters. Go figure; that with millions of households elbow deep in mixing stuffing, mashed potatoes, roasting turkeys, and browning marshmallows for their sweet potato casserole, kitchen accidents and fires drive up the calls for emergency personnel. For those who like to use turkey fryers at Thanksgiving, please defrost your turkey completely and dry it before immersing it in hot oil. Do not overfill the fryers. Wear protective equipment – eye protection and good grill mitts.

He said with a little bit of planning and common sense, all our citizens and our public safety personnel can enjoy a safe and fun holiday season.

Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Etheridge gave the following financial report for the month ending September 30, 2019. She reported the General Fund year to date receipts totaled \$4,676,620. The percentage of actual monies collected of adopted budgeted figures total 27.6%. General Fund year to date expenditures totaled \$4,394,350. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures total 25.9%. After

the month of September, 25.02% of the budget year has been completed. As a result, year-to-date revenues exceeded expenditures by \$282,270. She stated the revenues received during the month of September are the first Ad Valorem Tax Revenue allotment, Utility Franchise Tax Revenue, first allotment of Sales & Use Tax Revenue (for July sales) and the first allotment of Powell Bill Funding.

She reported Mr. Redman and his staff are still in the process of completing the FY 2018-2019 financial audit. Mr. Redman will be completing the audit report over the next few weeks and submitting for Local Government Commission approval. He will present the audit to Council as soon as LGC approval is obtained.

Finance Director Etheridge said they were starting build back cash reserves as they are beginning to receive quarterly revenue and they are still keeping a close eye on expenditures.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for the percentage of reserves at this point. She replied if he was referring to fund balance, they have not received the audit back yet, but they are right at 19%. He asked if that shapes up with previous time periods, somewhere in the same neighborhood. She replied yes it does.

Councilman Smith asked how much money was in the reserve funds now. Finance Director Etheridge replied the Cash Management Reserve is \$1.49M. She added fund balance is at \$3.2M.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked for clarification between the \$1.49M and the \$3.2M. She said the \$1.49M is the City's investment cash account and \$3.2M is the revenue reserves.

Councilman Smith asked how much of the \$1.49M is for debt service. She stated this is the Sales Tax revenue so this is earmarked. This is our savings, it is our cash management trust. He asked if any of that money is used for theatre payments or other things like that. She replied it grows quarterly because they fund this account from the Utility Franchise taxes and Sales & Use taxes. Then this money is transferred to operating cash when it is low typically throughout the first quarter of operations. That is why this is low at 1.49M until they begin to receive future quarterly revenue. Councilman Smith asked if the \$282,000 was in the General Fund. She replied yes.

Departmental Reports

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney was absent. No verbal report was given.

Police

Police Chief Martin presented the department's September report. He reported during the month of September the department answered 2,707 calls for service. They have talked quite a bit about the PACE Team that was recently activated and what kind of impact they would have on the community. Within the month of September they seized 519 grams of marijuana, 543 grams of opiates which one of those was a seizure/stop in conjunction with Wilson County for 10 kilos of cocaine. They have also seized \$37,000 with the PACE Team during the month of September. They have been doing a phenomenal job in regards to the fight against drugs in Halifax County, especially within the City Limits of Roanoke Rapids. They have done an outstanding job with picking up and doing what they were asked to do in stopping the drug trade in the City of Roanoke Rapids.

He said the new radar trailer is a custom signal radar trailer that is self-sufficient. They have it set up in front tonight for display so if they would like to go out after the meeting and take a look as the traffic is flowing. He has Captain Charles Vaught and Lt. Mike Moseley who have become his area experts with the radar trailer. They will see them throughout the City of Roanoke Rapids putting it in different places where the department has received complaints.

He said the reason they are excited about this particular radar trailer is because it is different from any one they have had before. He explained it was self-sufficient because it has solar panels on it so it will run as long as it can absorb light. They are able to leave it out in an area for days at a time. Another feature is it gives them feedback in areas of concern for speeding or accidents. For example, he has some statistics from Julian Allsbrook Hwy. On the 26th of September they had 1,394 vehicles go past the radar trailer from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It reported 135 vehicles went through there at 34-35 mph, 162 vehicles at 38-39 mph and 272 vehicles at 40+ mph which was in a 35 mph zone. With the business owners in that area complaining about the speed of vehicles, they placed the radar trailer so they could receive the information on when would be a peak time to place officers there for traffic control. It also prints a graph out in regards to when traffic goes through the area so they can potentially conduct more traffic enforcement if an officer was there at different times.

Chief Martin announced the department is preparing for the Trunk or Treat in partnership with the Parks & Recreation Department. It will be held October 31st on Doyle Field. The department enjoys this event and it gets the children off the main streets and keeps them safe.

Councilman Smith thanked the officers for what they do. He asked out of the \$37,000, how much comes back to the City. Chief Martin replied the department will get

approximately 70% out of that. It goes into their asset forfeiture which has to be used solely for law enforcement equipment. It cannot be used for anything outside of that. This enables them to make sure they have the proper equipment to continue to combat the drug trade and other needed equipment.

Councilman Smith stated he asked this question previously at a recent Council meeting, has there been any further discussion between him and the City Manager about the money staying in the police department and not the general fund from speeding and parking tickets. Chief Martin replied they have not discussed it since that meeting but that is something they have talked about it; they just need to set a time to sit down and talk about it. Councilman Smith stated he thinks the money they write tickets for should stay with the police department and spent on the equipment they use instead of going in the general fund.

Chief Martin stated he has reached out to Attorney Chichester in reference to the City ordinances and about making some changes so they would be more effective for them.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he agrees that monies should not go back into the general fund per se but he has some reservations on departments that are able to produce that they should be earmarked. They should be getting monies to combat crime. He believes a percentage should be earmarked.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky presented the September report. She reported the Hardees on Julian Allsbrook Highway is quickly being reconstructed. Next month, the Wendy's will be closed from the middle of November to the middle of December for an extensive remodel. They are reviewing site plans for the new automatic carwash to be located on Julian Allsbrook Highway west of Burger King. They have plans that should be coming in for another carwash to be located beside Starbucks on Premier Boulevard. They expect Jersey Mikes on Premier Boulevard to open tomorrow so there could be additional traffic in that area.

She announced Haggerty's Steakhouse has opened at 414 Becker Drive. They have heard some good reviews about the food and encourage everyone to patronize the restaurant.

She stated during the month of September they had an increase in the construction value of over \$2M in construction permitted. That is primarily due to the Roseburg Forestry Office that is going up on Highway 125. Rooney Ridge Apartments on Becker Drive is nearing completion at this time and looking for their final inspection almost imminently. San Jose Restaurant will be moving into the former steakhouse building on Premier Boulevard.

Planning & Development Director Lasky reported the department will be preparing an advisory for cold weather, mostly about keeping buildings, homes and outbuildings secured to prevent children and those people seeking warmth from going inside and trespassing on property. They will be doing this as a matter of home security and minimum housing to keep things safe.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon announced the following dates for upcoming events:

- October 25th at 5:30 p.m. – Halloween event at the Roanoke Canal Museum
- October 30th at 10:30 a.m. – Halloween event at the library based around their regular story time program.
- October 31st at TJ Davis – Halloween Carnival and Haunted House from 6 – 8:30 p.m.
- October 31st from 5:30 – 8 p.m. Trunk or Treat on Doyle Field
- October 31st at Chaloner Recreation Center – Halloween Party from 6 – 8:30 p.m.

He and Chief Martin plan to go to the radio station on Thursday morning to discuss the Halloween events and review the safety items.

He continued with dates for Christmas events. Thursday, December 5th will be the lighting of the Christmas tree and Sunday, December 8th will be the Christmas Parade. This is a little later than usual due to Thanksgiving falling late in November. He announced Halifax Linen is the sponsor of the parade again this year and Carey Foster has been chosen to be the Grand Marshal. He has been a part-time employee for the City of Roanoke Rapids since 1969. He has been a part of many things in the Parks & Recreation Department and youth baseball.

Public Works

Street Superintendent Wayne Medlin gave the report for the Public Works Department. He stated the department is transitioning from grass season to leaf season. They will start testing trucks in the next couple of weeks. Leaf season will begin the first full week of November.

Mr. Medlin also announced the resurfacing project is now complete for this year.

Fire

Fire Chief Patrick said one of the biggest items to report in the month of September

was the ISO Inspection. They are still awaiting their official grade. They did receive a letter stating that they met the qualifications to be certified for a basic fire department. They should hear something in the next couple of months on their grade, probably in December.

He reported the department responded to 137 calls with an average response time of 4:46 minutes. They were involved with 740 man hours of training during the month. They had two members that attended basically a chemistry class. They are in the process of being certified as Hazmat Technicians. The goal is to get them on the Regional Response Team out of Williamston. This will allow us to have a technician in this area. They will be able to access the scene and allow the other members of the team coming from other areas of the state to know what is going on. This program is state funded so if they respond to a call they will be paid by the State. There is only one other person in this area involved with it and that is Kevin Kupietz that used to be in charge of HCC Public Safety.

Chief Patrick said they had the Meth Lab Awareness Class in conjunction with the Police Department. He believed the police officers were familiar with a lot of it but it alerted the members of the Fire Department of what to look out for when they respond to calls.

He reported the department conducted 50 inspections with 6 plan reviews. As for their public outreach, they made contact with 783 citizens by going out doing normal fire prevention such as fire extinguisher classes to taking the Smoke House out to Harvest Days in Halifax.

Councilman Smith asked if EMS still furnishes the Fire Department with Narcan. Chief Patrick replied yes and Cardinal Innovations provides them and the Police Department with some last year. Some of it will be going out of date in the next month or so. Councilman Smith asked how much did Narcan cost. Chief Martin replied it was approximately \$40 per box with two doses of 4 milligrams. Chief Patrick added since he had been in the office (about 4 years) the department has not had to buy it.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle presented the September report. She explained HB399 which is directly related to the State Historic Tax Credit program. Some may be aware that the State still does not have a fiscal year budget for this year. Part of that budget included extending the State Historic Tax Credit plan which is set to sunset the end of this calendar year. HB399 is being pushed as a mini-bill. It started in the House of Representatives with our local Representative, Michael Wray as one of the sponsors.

On October 9th and 10th it went through Senate approval and passed unanimously all three readings. It is now with the House Rules Committee and she knows they are working hard to get this piece of legislative law passed. If they do, it will extend that sunset deadline. So projects started after January 1, 2020 will have a deadline of January 1, 2024. Projects that have started now through January 1, 2020 the deadline extends from January 1, 2028 to January 1, 2032. The actual percentage of the credits are the same. It is a 15% credit for income producing/commercial projects and since we are in a Tier 1 County, we get an additional 5% for a total of 20%. It is 10% for non-income producing/residential credits. She said it was important for economic development especially the further we get along without having a State budget. A grant tool called Main Street Solutions Fund is out of money and it hasn't been funded because the State has not passed their budget. There are many other grants and economic development tools on the state level that are in the same boat so the tax credits are an important part of economic redevelopment of downtowns.

She announced the David's restaurant business and property closing did occur last week so there is a lot of activity happening now. They are doing a lot of interior and exterior renovations. Their goal is to be open to the public as soon as possible. They would like to be open by Thanksgiving to capitalize on the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years' traffic. She said they are trying everything they can to make that dream a reality.

Main Street Director Caudle reported Rivertown Consignments has expanded and are in a new location at 933 Roanoke Avenue. It is a larger building and they are expanding into larger product categories. They have also extended their hours and are now open Tuesday – Saturday. Their old location 935 Roanoke Avenue has sold and the closing should occur in November. They listed the building and had an offer they accepted in less than 7 days which is impressive. Most of the buildings in the district are taking an average of 2 years to move. This is a testament that if you put a little money into your building, upfit it and stage it properly, it will move quickly. If the closing stays on schedule for mid-November, it will be the new location of Dixon Law Firm. They are an existing law firm here in Roanoke Rapids and they will be moving into the building. They have been working with them for years because they have always wanted to be on Roanoke Avenue. She stated this was exciting because it is something they have put a lot of effort in and it is now coming to fruition.

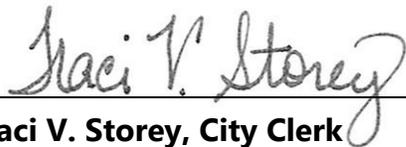
She called attention to numerous upcoming events listed in her report.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked with HB399, what kind of total average dollars would be affected by that; what would that mean to the City of Roanoke Rapids. She replied

currently it would not mean anything to us because we do not have any active projects. They have one potential project that may capitalize on that which is the Copper Spike Restaurant. They initially were not interested in it but they have now started meeting with the State Historic Preservation Office because they have decided they are interested. She did not know what that total value would be. They would have to get that information from SHPO and that is the only commercial credit that we could lose if the bill continues to sunset. There has been a lot of interest and Reid Thomas with SHPO has been here multiple times each year to look at different projects. It is really up to the individual and their CPA on whether it benefits them or not. She said statewide there are several million dollars in active projects that would be stalled or abandoned if they could not get the tax credits because a lot of time that is what turns a project from not financially feasible to feasible. She noted they were not in that situation now but it doesn't mean we could not have something that comes; they are seeing an uptick in interest. She said one of first questions outside of what is available is what monies do you have that could help me offset my costs. That is one of those tools they show every new property owner, business venture and investor they could use to make their project a reality.

Other Business/Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: 11/6/2019