



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 20, 2020 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)
Sandra W. Bryant)
Suetta S. Scarbrough)
Wayne Smith)

Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager
Bobby Martin, 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: Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director

Mayor Doughtie open the meeting and offered an invocation.

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members if there were any additions, corrections or any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening.

There being no conflicts, a motion was made by Councilman Smith to take Item 6 off the agenda and take it up at the November 17th meeting. He stated he knew there was a committee studying the Premier Extension area. Councilwoman Scarbrough seconded the motion.

Planning & Development Director Lasky requested City Council keep the item on the agenda and when they get to that item, declare the public hearing open and ask that it be continued to the date. Otherwise, by General Statute, they would be required to

re-advertise the public hearing. They would still send notices out, but it will keep the costs down administratively for the publication in the local newspaper.

Councilman Smith amended his previous motion to keep Item 6 on the agenda and once the public hearing is open, City Council will vote to continue it, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda as presented.

Special Recognitions

Retirement of K-9 Jimi

Police Chief Martin read the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION NO. 2020.13

K-9 RETIREMENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, K-9 Jimi is owned by the City of Roanoke Rapids; and

WHEREAS, K-9 Jimi has faithfully served the City for five years, and has recently been retired; and

WHEREAS, retired canines cannot be adopted to private citizens because of their specialized training for police situations; and

WHEREAS, Officer Hannah Grimes, K-9 Jimi's handler, wishes to keep him; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council, by this resolution, wish to express its great appreciation to K-9 Jimi for his service, loyalty, and dedication to the City of Roanoke Rapids.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Roanoke Rapids City Council in accordance with North Carolina General Statute 160A-266 declares K-9 Jimi to be surplus property upon retirement from service and authorizes his assigned handler, Hannah Grimes, to take ownership of K-9 Jimi upon his execution of a hold harmless agreement to provide proper care for the dog for the remainder of the life of the animal and a \$1 adoption fee. By executing that agreement, Hannah Grimes will assume all liability and responsibility for the dog.

ADOPTED this 20th Day of October, 2020

Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

ATTEST:

Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant and unanimously carried to adopt Resolution No. 2020.13 declaring K-9 Jimi as surplus property and awarding him to Hannah Grimes.

Police Department Promotions

Police Chief Martin announced and recognized the following promotions made in the past the 6-8 months:

- ◆ **Charles Burnette** – Patrol Captain (Worked with RRPD since 2000)
- ◆ **Adam Salmon** – Patrol Lieutenant (Worked with RRPD since August 2012)
- ◆ **Daniel Jenkins** (not present) – Patrol Lieutenant (Worked with RRPD since 2012)
- ◆ **Matthew Hunsucker** – Patrol Sergeant (Worked with RRPD since August 2014)
- ◆ **Obert Wiltsie** – Patrol Sergeant (Worked with RRPD since August 2016)
- ◆ **Jeremy Horne** – Master Officer (Worked with RRPD since May 2019)
- ◆ **Hannah Grimes** – Master Officer. Unfortunately, leaving RRPD to work for NCDMV as an Inspector.

Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Councilwoman Bryant, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to approve the October 6, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes as drafted.

Public Hearing

Consideration of Rezoning Request

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated they received the following rezoning request on March 3, 2020:

Rezoning Request (map attached) – Amendment to the Roanoke Rapids Zoning Map to rezone Halifax Co. Parcels 1200528 (2.5± acres), 1202044 (6.5± acres), 1200186 (6.5± acres) and 1201123 (6.5± acres) from R-40 Residential District to B-4 Commercial District. These properties total 21.8± acres with approximately 870 feet of frontage on the western right-of-way of NC Highway 125 and 600 feet of frontage on the southern right-of-way of American Legion Road.

She stated shortly after receiving the application, the COVID crisis affected us and hindered the ability to hold any meetings. The Planning Board finally held a meeting in September and provided a favorable recommendation for the requested rezoning. At the beginning of tonight's meeting, City Council stated they would consider tabling the public hearing. She said she could do her presentation now or wait until November 17th if that is still what City Council wants to do at this time.

The consensus of the City Council was to wait to hear Planning & Development Director Lasky's presentation on November 17th.

Mayor Doughtie declared the public hearing open.

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to continue the public hearing until the November 17, 2020 City Council meeting.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Scherer gave the following report:

Based on comments from different City organizations and individual citizens, the staff have put together the best City holiday events for Halloween and Christmas within the known limitations of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. They will provide details of these events in their department reports.

We have been cautiously surprised by some of our General Fund revenue sources during the first three months of this fiscal year. Some of our largest funds, Ad Valorem, Sales Tax and Residential Solid Waste User, are slightly ahead of their income this same time a year ago. One fund, Utility Franchise Taxes, is slightly behind prior year to date income. The state's Department of Revenue recently released its monthly gross sales data, which shows every sales tax category is up in August 2020 compared to August 2019, except for food. However, Dr. Michael Walden, NCSU economist, says the state is doing well but it is a very uneven recovery especially for low income earners. Given projected revenue decreases by the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) this fiscal year, we are hopeful this positive trend continues, but we are not basing budget decisions on higher revenue income the rest of this fiscal year. We still have personnel and equipment needs in Public Safety departments that I am working on how to fill them. It is still unknown if we will receive any further revenue assistance from the Federal or State governments as part of any new stimulus packages.

We still have not received any formal report or response from our liability insurance carrier for the claim on the communications tower behind City Hall. I have spoken to our City Attorney regarding if the City has any potential liability if any portion of or if all of the tower collapses now and he feels we have taken every action to prevent any responsibility claims if this happens. Hopefully, we can reach a mutually acceptable decision soon with the insurance carrier on what to do with the tower.

The Planning Director and myself attended the scheduled meeting last week with the

County Economic Development Director and other organizational representatives on the Premier Boulevard Corridor Extension plan referenced by Councilman Smith. Our main focus is to consider the appropriate zoning designations for this area to align with recommended/potential businesses and residential uses from the Exit 171 Study. Another area of concentration is the development of utilities infrastructure (water/sewer, electricity, etc.) through this corridor. The completion of the road extension project by NCDOT is scheduled for spring-summer of 2021. This corridor is not in the City limits but is in our Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) for planning and development purposes.

I attended the Halifax County Business Horizons virtual board meeting last week. The Chamber of Commerce is planning to hold their annual dinner on January 21st pending any pandemic restrictions. Other issues of economic importance to other Halifax County entities were discussed and voted on by the Board.

Councilman Ferebee and I participated in a virtual meeting last week with representatives from the NCLM. The League has been hosting several policy discussion sessions for members to share their ideas for legislation and policy making for 2021-2022. These “roundtable” style sessions gave us a chance to talk in small groups with municipal colleagues from around the state. Several positive and constructive policy ideas were developed for the League to include in their legislative agenda for next year.

The Public Works Department recently reviewed the Roanoke Rapids Theatre facility to conduct a maintenance inspection. Mr. Chalker will go into detail in his report on his findings. We did this to insure the facility is being maintained properly during the period of inactivity due to the pandemic restrictions.

Given the unusual circumstances and rhetoric of this year’s election process, the Police Department is planning to be ready to respond to any disruptive activities on Election Day at the city’s polling locations. We want everyone to be able to vote in this pandemic environment without any problems or concerns.

Councilman Smith said City Council was under the impression that when the tower damage was brought up that the City was not going to have any trouble with the insurance company for the liability of the tower. He asked what has changed on that. City Manager Scherer replied that was their initial impression in talking with the insurance carrier. Since then their forensic engineer came and looked at the tower and they also conducted a non-destructive test on the tower and unofficially they feel there is not as much damage there as the structural engineer indicated. He stated the City has not received the insurance carrier’s final report yet, but they seem to have

changed their tune.

Councilman Smith asked what kind of liability would the City have if the tower falls.

Attorney Davis replied at this point he feels the City has done as much as they can. Certainly if the carrier has made that decision, it is their decision to make. He talked with Public Works Director Chalker about the steps the City needs to take to firm that up and get some kind of opinion from them in writing. Once received, the City can rely on that. In the insurance carrier's defense, it seems they have done testing and verified in their estimation that the tower does not need to come down. He was not a structural engineer, he cannot make that decision so he has to rely on that and believes the City can rely on that.

Councilman Smith asked if the City had any legal recourse to go back to them if they refuse to pay it. Attorney Davis said he thinks they could; it depends on the nature of the final refusal and they are still hammering that out at this point.

Councilman Smith asked how was the City using communications on the tower now. City Manager Scherer said Public Works Chalker could explain that in more detail but it is primarily used for the City's radio communications for police, fire and other departments.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the City had other insurance throughout with the same carrier or would they consider moving that if necessary. City Manager Scherer replied yes, this is the City's liability carrier for all the City's property. However, they could look at going out for proposals from other carriers if they do not feel the City is being serviced appropriately by this carrier.

Finance Director's Report

City Manager Scherer presented the September 2020 Financial Report in Finance Director Etheridge's absence. He reported in the month of September the year-to-date revenue exceeded the year-to-date expenses by \$1,526,423. As he noted in his report, ad valorem, sales tax and other revenue was up in the first quarter as compared to a year ago.

He said the sales tax revenue reflects July receipts and the ad valorem revenue reflects the first of the City's two major receipts from Halifax County. However, they must remain cautious in spending going forward into the City's leaner revenue months. They cannot count on revenue streams to remain high as they continue to have the economy try to function under the pandemic restrictions imposed on businesses,

along with the unknown potential future restrictions that the government officials feel that the infection rate of COVID-19 or the flu is too high. As they go forward, his goal is to determine how best to maximize the efficiency of their funding allocations based upon their strategic priorities of community safety and effective basic City services. In trying to be good stewards of our tax dollars they must adapt to the new normal of limited financial resources in determining how best to allocate our tax dollars to serve the maximum number of our citizens.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the auditors were nearing being finished. City Manager Scherer said in their last conversations, they had completed the pension review that was required of them. They were waiting for the auditor to contact them for a final out brief and he would expect that to be sometime next month.

Departmental Reports

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney presented the September report. She reported the current open positions being advertised were for Police Officer and Part-time Lifeguard at the Aquatic Center. During the month, the department received 21 applications, they hired two part-time people and three full-time people which filled most of the positions that were open. She set up a Flu Shot Clinic on October 7th for the City's employees. They sent out 189 letters to active employees including retirees. Sixty-two (62) employees participated in the clinic. She completed the annual NCLM salaries survey and it should be available on the NCLM website the end of October.

Police

Police Chief Martin presented the September report. He announced the Police Department and the Parks & Rec Department would be holding a Trunk or Treat event on Doyle Field October 31. They would be practicing social distancing, safety and wearing masks.

He reported the department is continuing the Stop the Violence Campaign they started earlier in the month. From October 9th-14th officers were out in the City's trouble areas. They conducted nineteen (19) traffic stops which yielded 5 DWLR, 3 operating without license, 3 with no insurance, 2 revoked tags, 1 marijuana charge, drug paraphernalia charge and discovered a lot of individuals that had outstanding warrants. Through these traffic stops there were able to charge one for unauthorized use, discharged a weapon into an occupied dwelling, discharged a weapon within city limits, fireman by felon, a couple of criminal summons and an order for arrest. One of the areas they have worked on is around Church Street and Carter Street where they had significant violence over a period of a month or so. The landowner has been

in touch with the department and is cooperating with them. He stated they should see some changes in that area which will benefit the citizens that are living there and the surrounding area.

Police Chief Martin said the department has been contacted requesting officers to check on the polls to make sure everything is safe and that everybody has the opportunity to vote. Nothing has indicated a particular reason why other than it is what they do when there is an election. They understand there are long lines due to COVID-19 and social distancing, plus there is an uptick in voter turnout.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if they were going to post or rotate or both at the polls. Chief Martin replied officers would rotate; they would not stand there. They have officers that work the area so they will do their normal foot patrols and will be nearby.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon presented the September report. He said due to COVID-19 and the Governor's Order on mass gatherings, the City will not be able to logistically hold a Christmas Parade and its other annual Christmas events. They met with several community leaders in a meeting where they provided some input. They have planned three Christmas events that will adhere to the Governor's Order.

He announced on Friday, December 4, 2020 at 6 p.m. they will light the Avenue and Centennial Park at one time. Centennial Park will have a 25 foot Christmas tree and other Christmas elements and lights throughout the park. It will be well decorated and be the focal point of the community Christmas here in Roanoke Rapids. Families will have the opportunity to ride by or walk through the park that evening. Food trucks will also be available for families to stop and get dinner while taking in the sites. Centennial Park will be able to be viewed everyday throughout the holidays.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said on Saturday, December 5, 2020, they will hold a Christmas Ride Along starting at Kirkwood Adams Community Center. Fifty (50) people will be allowed to register their vehicle. Chief Martin and the Police Department will escort a ride-along on the Avenue around Centennial Park and finish down at First Avenue. They will take the first 50 people but if they do have more than 50 people, they will continue this program every Saturday until Christmas. The department will start taking registrations by phone on November 2nd at 10 a.m. in the Parks & Rec Administration office. They will encourage people to decorate their vehicles for the ride along. There will be no police or fire vehicles and no trailers will be allowed.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked for information about the 25 foot Christmas tree

that will be in the park. Main Street Director Caudle replied that part of the conversations with the community leaders was to talk about if the City removed traditional things such as the Christmas parade what could they do to bring a positive light and spark some joy for the holidays. Through those discussions, they decided they needed to start actively raising money to bring in new, commercial Christmas décor for the City. Over the last 3-4 weeks, Parks & Rec, herself and some others have worked hard and raised approximately \$20,000. This will help pay for the commercial tree and other decorations. The lifespan on these products are about 6-10 years. It will be a 25 foot tree that will be pre-lit and have a 4-ft star and ornaments attached. They are also bringing in a 6-ft tall giant ornament stack that will provide a photo op for selfies. They expect to see a lot of social media shares of Centennial Park because of that. They are also creating a 9-ft tall JOY sign where the "O" is an ornament arch and that will be in 1026 Roanoke Avenue. They expect that to also be a photo opportunity that families will use. All these items will be purchased with private money. She announced the contributors that have made this possible: Main Street, Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Angels Closet, The Rewritten Story Foundation, Halifax Linen, Rivertown Consignments and Edward Jones Investments. They have already put in an order for the large commercial items and they will be here in the coming weeks. She and Parks & Recreation Director Simeon are working together to buy additional lights and other ground elements to place in Centennial Park. It will be one large experience.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked what was wrong with the tree that was planted. Public Works Director Chalker replied the tree behind the Lloyd Andrews building the City normally uses is entirely overgrown. They had plans to do something better so when the commercial plans were put into effect earlier, they made the decision not to remove all the lights and trim the tree. It is a very large undertaking. The lights are really down in the tree because the tree has grown a lot. Usually every 3-4 years they have to take the lights out and trim the tree and put the lights back in; it's a lot to that. Also, there are a lot of lights in the tree and the power consumption, even with LED lighting, is pretty large because of the distance of the wire that runs through the tree. Long-term once they switch to something that is designed to be used in a commercial format, it's going to be much nicer and easier to maintain.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked where the tree would be stored from January to December. Parks & Recreation Director replied in the storage room of the TJ Davis Recreation Center. Main Street Director Caudle explained the tree will flatten down.

Main Street Director Caudle said traditionally Main Street tries to sandwich some type of event for the holidays between the City's tree lighting and the Christmas Parade so they are planning to do the same thing this year in a modified version.

Uptown, they will host a Christmas Joy Crawl on Saturday, December 5, 2020 from 3 p.m. until everyone is gone. It is basically a shopping and dining, self-guided tour through the 900, 1000 and 1100 blocks of Roanoke Avenue. They believe this event will feel like a mix between Arts on the Avenue and Christmas at 1026, but they are extending it so it is a much longer period of time. They hope this will prevent hitting a mass gathering given they do not know what that will be in December, but they will make sure they are adhering to whatever regulations are in place at that time. They will have the letters to Santa mailbox in 1026 again and plan to have a couple of special appearances of Santa.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated if there were no questions they would start marketing and discussing Christmas with the public in the coming weeks.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the TJ Davis Recreation Center did anything to restructure their hours or programs while the students were out for Christmas, even though they may not be in school then. It has always been a concern to him that because there are things that young people have at their disposal, to be able to offer to them places to go and things to do and that the recreation center may not be open as much. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said they would look at that. Right now kids are getting there between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. They have been staying open later in the evening until 7 p.m. so for those who want to use the workout room or walk on the track especially since the weather is going to start breaking. He will bring City Council more information on that next month as they get closer to that.

Mayor Doughtie stated his thought was the children were not being able to socialize amongst themselves like they would if they were going to school. So when he was saying the rec center was staying open until 7 p.m., he was thinking more about 12 – 17 year old kids don't want to go home at 7 p.m. There are not many places for them to go. He was wondering if on a Friday or Saturday night, the City could have some employees there with good oversight. It would not have to be anything particularly planned really, just allow them to get together in a socially distanced format and enjoy being around each other in a safe environment. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied he thought that was a good idea and if it was the Council's wish, he would put that in motion. City Manager Scherer asked for Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to give him a proposal on that and he would get with City Council.

Councilwoman Bryant thanked both Parks & Recreation Director Simeon and Main Street Director Caudle for their efforts in putting this together in order to bring some joy and share in the upcoming holidays. She thinks the ideas are different but thinks it is something they can all participate in.

Councilman Smith asked Parks & Recreation Director Simeon to explain what a contact was in his monthly report. He replied a contact is a visitor/physical person.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the Roanoke Canal Museum was open. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon replied yes, part-time.

Planning & Development

Planning & Development Director Lasky presented the September report. She stated although they did not have a lot of new and exciting projects to report, the inspection department and compliance remains steady and busy. There are a lot of home improvements projects going on throughout the city. She noted City Council held a few public hearings concerning the CDBG application. She did not have any information yet, but should hear something the first of November about the award status. They received approximately fourteen (14) applications from residents for the home improvement program. They were anxiously awaiting to hear from the State on that application.

She announced the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Government (UCPCOG) was awarded a \$300,000 EPA grant for the Brownsfield Program. The City has two properties that are included within that program for assessment. One of them is the WestPoint Stevens Sonrise Mill property. The final part of this will be funded for the remaining assessments and they anticipate this site will receive a ready to reuse designation as part of the NC Brownsfield Program that will help with marketing and advertising for the potential redevelopment or reuse of that 54 acre mill site. It has a lot of potential for economic development opportunities with the location with I-95 and rail spur adjacent to the property and utilities are present and available. Once they get past the Brownsfield transactions, they may see some more activity and interest in that site. The other site included in the program was formerly under the ownership of JAECO (part of Rightmyer family) that was donated to the City. It is a 6 acre site adjacent to Ledgerwood Park. A Phase I environment study will be conducted for this site and depending on the results of the study, ideally in the future it would be great site for the expansion of Ledgerwood Park. The Upper Coastal Plains Coalition that she is a part of will meet tomorrow virtually at 9:30 a.m. to discuss these projects and the status of them.

Additionally, the UCPCOG has applied for a Stormwater Grant and would be a part 2 to a grant the UCPCOG had been awarded a couple of years ago for the mapping and location of the City's stormwater management systems. Hopefully that will be funded. She mentioned there are no City funds involved in these two initiatives with UCPCOG, it is all grant funds from the EPA or the Division of Water Quality.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker presented the September report. He stated the department was transitioning from grass cutting season to leaf pick up season. They already have trucks picking up some leaves and testing the trucks out.

He reported on the status of the lightning damage from the September 10th storm. Right now the damages without the communications tower is up to a total of \$21,282. They have communicated this to the insurance company and have received invoices where the City has actually purchased these items and they are awaiting for the company to send a check in that amount. There are a lot of Ethernet switches and communication type things on this list. There are computers, printers and to this day they occasionally discover something else that was part of that claim. That part of the claim is going well.

Public Works Director Chalker asked Councilman Smith to repeat the question he had earlier. Councilman Smith asked what the City was doing now for communications since the tower is not able to be used. Public Works Director Chalker replied the tower is in use because they have not taken it down. They have one engineer that says the tower is damaged and the insurance company has told them verbally that their engineer says the tower is okay. As City Attorney Davis stated earlier, the City is waiting on the other engineering report with more facts and hopefully some results or outcome of their non-destructive testing. The tower still stands and there are three antennas on the tower at 115 feet elevation. There are also two other antennas/transceivers on the tower and they were about to add a third for the Fire Department that sends out signals for the network that allows them to link buildings without wires. If the tower stands, they will put the third antenna up and Chief Patrick will not have to pay for monthly internet services. They will beam them down to the Fire Department through the air off of the City Hall fiber internet feed. He stated it is a very viable tower; it is used every day. He would be happy to get City Council a tour of that particular process.

Councilman Smith asked if the insurance company x-rayed the tower. Public Works Director Chalker replied he did not see an x-ray machine. He believes they used either a ground penetrating radar or maybe sonar. They are waiting for those results. They were told the results look very good for the structural integrity of the tower, but as Attorney Davis eluded to, they were not structural engineers so they will have to choose what is best once they get all the facts. The insurance company has been a little slow to respond. He did have a conversation with one of the representatives just before this meeting to let them know that they were looking to hear something; they need information.

Public Works Director Chalker reported on the status of the maintenance list for the Roanoke Rapids Theatre. The original list began with the elevator that was out of service which has now been repaired, so the elevator is back in service. There was also some roof leaks up top and they have completed the repairs on all the roof leaks. The City asked them to complete any service and inspection requirements for the fire pump and also the generator that supports the fire pump. That step has been completed. The City also asked them to repair and restore to working order the DMX lighting desk which controls the production lighting in the building. The device works on a minimal basis but it has been damaged. That step has not been completed. The City made a site visit on October 1, 2020 based on the request from the City Manager. He, City Manager Scherer and Councilman Smith went to the Theatre and discovered either mold and/or mildew in the main auditorium. They are not sure what it is; there are tests that can be done for that, but they have not taken that step yet. The City did ask them to remediate that as soon as possible. He re-visited the Theatre this morning and it has improved somewhat but has not been remediated as of yet. He stated there have been several recommendations made to them. They have followed some of those such as running the HVAC system in a certain way to keep the humidity down in the building. Again, there is a mild improvement.

Councilman Smith asked about information going around about the mold/mildew in the Theatre is not healthy or safe; is that a false statement. Public Works Director Chalker replied he was hesitate to answer that question because he does not know what is growing there. The City had another vendor look at that but have not received any information back. To make an official determination on that, the City would need to take samples of whatever is on the surfaces there and send it off. At this point, they do not feel it is the City's responsibility. The City is just overseeing based on their interest in the building, but they can make that recommendation to them. The current owners have asked for a local vendor to look at what is going on there and they may already have that in process.

Councilman Smith said when he went out there the only thing he saw was some on the door jams and stuff like that. The reason he asks that question is because he received a call asking that question so he called the City Manager and he doesn't want false information getting out in the public. Public Works Director Chalker stated he could not say it was safe or unsafe. He can say something is there and it is something the City may have had a tiny problem with it in the past but responded to it immediately as a maintenance staff. It does need immediate attention and certainly can be tested to make sure that it is not a health hazard to someone in the building. It could also just be some mildew. Councilman Smith said it looked more like mildew to him when he was there.

Fire

Fire Chief Patrick presented the September report. He announced October is Fire Prevention month and reminded everyone to check their smoke detectors and practice good cooking safety. As of right now, the department has their virtual learning/fire prevention information out and has shared it with all the local schools that have requested it. Les Atkins from the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District has all the Fire Department's videos and has shared them with all the teachers throughout the City schools. They have also extended out to other school districts such as Halifax Academy, Weldon City Schools and Halifax County Schools. They did so because many of the volunteer departments do not have the time and capability to put something like that together. They made it available so those students in those areas could still benefit from the fire safety message the department put together.

He also announced on October 30th the Health Department will hold a Drive Thru Flu Clinic at Fire Station No. 2 on Hwy. 125. They will move their trucks outside the bay and nurses will be set up inside the truck bay to allow citizens to drive in, get a flu shot, get educated on what they need to do as far as the flu goes and then drive out. They will never have to get out of their car. He said they did this about 7-8 years ago and it seemed to work well.

Chief Patrick reported they received their grant funding this month from Factory Mutual in the amount of \$2,000 towards a laptop and tablet for their fire prevention efforts. They hope to order it in the next week or so.

He thanked everyone that came by for the Enviva presentation last week for a thermal imaging camera. Mr. Brown from Enviva presented the department with the funds to purchase a new thermal imaging camera.

Councilman Smith asked Chief Patrick to explain how they declare a \$112 million dollars on property value out of 69 calls on the monthly report. Chief Patrick replied any location the department goes to, for example a motel, that is the value on the tax record is what they use for that figure. That is where the value comes from.

Mayor Doughtie said he attended the Enviva presentation for the camera funding and he understood Representative Michael Wray was instrumental in helping the Fire Department to get that funding so he would like to thank him for that.

Main Street

Main Street Director Caudle presented the September report. She reported they did complete the business surveys and received some decent results. Out of the respondents, 70% of them indicated sales were up year over year. Most of them at

that point had up until the end of August so was a good indication of things to come. However, 100% said the last six weeks of the calendar year are critical to them. So that window from Thanksgiving until the end of the year is very important to small businesses. About half of them said if the holiday sales are low or not what they are projecting, that could create some destructions for them in 2021. She encouraged everyone when they start their holiday shopping or looking for somewhere to take-out food or dine, make sure they think of the local businesses.

She announced the Avenue Station Lofts (old Police Station) at 632 Roanoke Avenue, are now preleasing the ten (10) apartments. They're rough-in inspections are completed in all ten and the fire bay apartments are the closest to completion, but there is a lot of work still to be done. The 1 and 2 bedroom units range from \$650-\$750 a month. As of last Monday, one unit had been leased so they are hoping that all ten will be leased by the time they open.

Main Street Director Caudle said O Aetos, the Greek restaurant at 1011 Roanoke Avenue, will be doing a soft opening event this Friday and Saturday evening for dine-in dinner. It is a four course meal with two seatings each night. Reservations are strongly recommended. She stated they needed all the support they can get because they have been through a lot since they purchased the building.

She reported The Mill Coffee & Eatery at 1020 Roanoke Avenue is anticipating a soft opening in early November. They have been ready to open since April, but since they had not started their Health Department inspections, they had to wait until Phase 3. They are waiting for the County to come give them the final okay so they can open their door. That will be a great breakfast and lunch spot.

She announced T-Time Café & Brewery will be going in the old bus station which is in the 1100 block of Roanoke Avenue. A couple from Raleigh have purchased the building. They are hoping phase 1 will be complete by summer of 2021. There has already been some activity there and exterior improvements. They are in their second run with the historic architect and State Historic Preservation will be here in the next week to create a tax credit project for them. This will be a full building rehabilitation and a much needed addition to the Avenue.

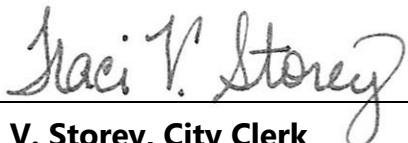
Councilman Smith asked what was being planned for Main Street about people coming and was anybody helping them. Main Street Director Caudle replied the Main Street board has been active in a virtual sense since the pandemic started. Next Thursday, October 29th will be an in-person meeting for them. They have done some business visits but she was hoping as things progress and things get better they can become more active again as a volunteer board. She added HCCVB has always been

a great help to Main Street with events. They have partnered with Main Street and Parks & Rec for the holidays including a donation to help with holiday décor. They advertise every event Main Street hosts in the District and the holidays will be no different. They are very active and supportive of the program.

Councilman Smith asked if they were doing anything to help bring people in shopping. Main Street Director Caudle replied yes, they have done some radio and television advertising and have an ad in the December issue of *Our State Magazine* that promotes local shopping and dining. So some of the City's businesses and restaurants are featured in that. As far as program wide advertisement, they have not done that. They try to pick spots that would be of interest to visitors and highlight them. For example, Rivertown Consignments, because they have a lot of made in NC products are being highlighted in the December feature of *Our State Magazine*.

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 6:25 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: November 4, 2020