



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

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, August 3, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

**Present:** Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor  
Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem  
Sandra Bryant)  
Suetta S. Scarbrough)  
Wayne Smith)

## **Council Members**

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

**Absent:** Ernest Bobbitt, Council Member

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and offered an invocation.

### **Special Recognitions – Nathan Wayne Medlin**

Public Works Director Chalker recognized Wayne Medlin who retired from the Public Works Department on July 1, 2021 as the Street Superintendent. He served 32 years with the City.

### **Special Recognitions – Jeff Watson**

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon recognized Jeff Watson who retired from the Roanoke Rapids Public Library on August 1, 2021 as Head Librarian. He served 14 years with the City.

### **Special Recognitions – Bruce Norton**

Police Chief Martin recognized Bruce Norton who retired from the Police Department on July 1, 2021 as Patrol Lieutenant. He served 26 years with the City. Chief Martin

presented Lt. Norton with his badge and service weapon. *(City Council will need to consider action to officially award Lt. Norton his service side arm and badge as required.)*

### **Special Recognitions – Joseph Scherer**

Mayor Doughtie recognized Joseph Scherer who retired on August 1, 2021 as City Manager. He served 9 years with the City. Mayor Doughtie also presented Mr. Scherer with book, “Roanoke Rapids – The First 100 Years, 1897-1997” that included written messages from City Council and personnel.

### **Special Guest Speaker – Congressman G.K. Butterfield**

Mayor Doughtie introduced and welcomed US Congressman G.K. Butterfield to address City Council and the public.

Congressman Butterfield thanked Mayor Doughtie for having him and said he felt very much at home in Halifax County since he grew up coming to the area. He said he represents 750,000 people, 15 counties and 95 municipalities within those counties and he has been in Congress for 17 years. A few of his job descriptions as their Congressman include the following:

- Cast votes reflecting the views of his constituents and his own personal values.
- To be a conduit between his constituents and the Federal Government.
- To know how his constituents think and feel and what their complaints are. He encouraged people to speak out and contact his office.

Congressman Butterfield explained the Federal Government takes in approximately \$3.4 trillion every year. They spend between \$4.5 and \$5 trillion per year. This in turn creates a deficient and after a while it will catch up to you and this is where they are as a Federal Government. They have experienced deficits over the last 30+ years. He said when he first went to Congress, the debt was \$11-12 trillion. Today it is about \$28 trillion. They try to get the deficit under control, but unexpected events happen such as 9-11, Iraq, Afghanistan, increased health care costs and COVID-19. They find themselves continuing to build the debt and he was concerned about it.

He discussed the various bills passed and monies spent to help offset the effects of COVID-19 such as Families First, CARES Act, Omnibus bill and the American Rescue Plan. \$9.7M has come to Halifax County from the ARP Act.

Congressman Butterfield announced that on Sunday night 67 senators finally reached an agreement on a major infrastructure bill that has tremendous potential for eastern North Carolina. The bill would cost \$550 billion and they would add that

to the \$450 billion they were planning to spend. He gave a breakdown of how the monies would be appropriated.

- \$110 billion for roads and bridges
- \$66 billion for passenger rail
- \$11 billion for safety programs
- \$39 billion for transit
- \$25 billion for airports
- \$17 billion for ports and waterways
- \$46 billion for other infrastructure
- \$7 billion for low-carbon zero emission school busses and ferries
- \$55 billion for water infrastructure
- \$73 billion for power and electric grid infrastructure
- \$65 billion for broadband

He discussed the HOPE Program which assists tenants who are behind on their rent because of COVID. Some may be manipulating the program, but for the most part there are people who are genuinely out of work that cannot pay their rent. The problem is that not everyone knows about the program. The money is there for the asking. All they have to do is go online and complete a user-friendly form. The program offers a 14-18 day turnaround and it will pay every penny of past due rent plus three months in advance. The check is made payable to the landlord.

Congressman Butterfield thanked the Mayor and City Council for having him.

Mayor Doughtie expressed his appreciation to Congressman Butterfield for his comments and felt it was very informative. He believed the community knows more of what his job entails now. They looked forward to him coming back to see them again.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee thanked Congressman Butterfield for coming and recognized his District Director, Reginald Speight. He thanked the community and area elected officials for coming out as well.

Councilman Smith briefly left the building to speak to Congressman Butterfield.

### **New Camera System Overview**

Police Chief Martin gave a PowerPoint presentation on the new Flock Camera System the Police Department is looking at implementing throughout the City of Roanoke Rapids. He spoke with Attorney Davis and passed on information to him for any concerns that some individuals may feel their rights are being violated with these camera systems being in place around the city. He informed City Council that he had

a representative from the Flock Safety System joining via Zoom to be available to answer any questions or concerns about their product.

He stated Flock Safety Camera System is an investigative tool that helps the Police Department solve crimes. The cameras will be looking for vehicles and license plates; it does not do facial recognition.

Chief Martin reported hundreds of law enforcement agencies across the country truck Flock Safety's license plate reading cameras, machine learning software and real-time alerts.

- It detects objective data: what actually happened at the scene of a crime.
- Decode evidence in real-time.
- Deliver leads to the agency.

Councilman Smith returned to the meeting.

Chief Martin said protecting the citizens and community they live in is of the utmost importance. They have made Flock Safety cameras a part of their comprehensive strategy to protect the city, citizens and officers.

He noted Flock Camera Systems are more than just a camera company, they are a public safety operating system that empowers private communities and law enforcement to work together to eliminate crime. They build devices that detect and capture objective evidence (factually based), machine learning that uncovers investigative leads, and real-time alerts that prepare officers to be effective in the field. These cameras will bring the department provable facts.

Chief Martin reiterated that there is no facial recognition with these cameras. These cameras will not be monitored 24/7. They will get alerts from the cameras if there is a car that comes back stolen and has been put into the national database (hot files). He read Flock Safety's privacy statement and stated all the information presented was taken off of Flock Safety's website. He said the information the department receives from the system is for their use only. Every time they login they have to give a reason why they are logging in and what they are searching and they have an audit trail. Ultimately they will have admin to make sure the policy is followed and they audit themselves on a regular basis. He will have several auditors in place to make sure the policy is followed.

He stated the Roanoke Rapids Police Department's goal is to provide a safe community by maintaining a proactive approach in the prevention, detection, and investigation of criminal activity. This will be accomplished through the highest ethical and professional standards in partnership with the community they serve. This will build positive partnerships with citizens and leaders of the community to both increase

legitimacy and enhance public safety. The implementation of the Flock Safety Camera System is solely for investigative purposes and all data collected shall be retained and used per policy.

Chief Martin asked them to review the additional information in their packets which included the policy he has implemented and put in place for the cameras.

Councilwoman Bryant said she assumed they had special places they planned to put the cameras. Chief Martin replied they would be placed on the major thoroughfares throughout Roanoke Rapids. They will not be placed in any neighborhood areas, private streets, or on any resident's property. They will be on NCDOT covered streets.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked why it was so important that the cameras not identify the face. Chief Martin referred to Attorney Davis to answer the question. Attorney Davis replied recently the Town of Norlina indicated they would be instituting facial recognition. He advised Chief Martin that he would not recommend the City of Roanoke Rapids consider anything like that under current law. The law with respect to collection of facial data like that is not settled yet, especially with what happens on the back end of that. No courts that he is aware of have agreed that is okay to do. He does not recommend the City of Roanoke Rapids be on the cutting edge of anything like that. He also felt the public would have concerns about the collection of facial data.

Attorney Davis said he and Chief Martin have discussed what the Police Department was doing here with the collection of license plate information several times. It is something that allowed by statute and has a history in NC. There are general statutes that govern that. One of the regulations set out in the statutes is that if a municipality decides to collect license plate data, they must have a policy. They have created a policy which is included in their agenda packet. He also noted the policy provides some restrictions so they are not just collecting and keeping it forever. In fact, there is a very short time window that the data is allowed to be held. If it needed to be held longer, the purpose for holding onto the data has to be in writing.

Chief Martin added they have not had the opportunity for this type of technology in the City before. This will not only help with the criminal aspect but they also have individuals who are reported missing. They may drive away, get lost or confused. If they have a description or tag number they can enter it into the national database. In turn they may get a hit that the vehicle has been located. He said they always verify all the information to make sure.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated she was not questioning what they were doing, but doesn't seem they were going far enough by not being able to identify the driver. She understands that they were saying they should do that. Chief Martin replied he feels confident that the camera system they were looking at was going as far as they need

to go. This is a tool to help make the community safe and help identify individuals who are missing. They would use this to help assist with investigations.

Councilman Smith asked how many cameras they were looking to purchase. Chief Martin replied ten cameras. Councilman Smith said they were \$2,500 each per year so the first year they have enough money to pay for them. He asked Chief Martin about the second year. Chief Martin replied he would come back to City Council and report the cameras were working so well that they will put the money in the department's budget.

Mayor Doughtie asked how much that would be. Chief Martin replied \$27,000. He noted if anything happened to the camera(s) the company would replace it at no charge. He added they received donations from businesses and businessmen within the City of Roanoke Rapids that feel this is something that will help with the safety of the community. The Department is very appreciative and he plans to release the information on those who donated and helped make this possible.

Councilman Smith asked if this was a renewable contract each year. Chief Martin replied yes.

Mayor Doughtie said the cost is approximately half of a salary for an officer. He hopes Chief Martin will bring back data showing how it saved the City money versus time spent.

Councilman Smith asked if the City would have to pay for storage of data beyond the 30 days. Chief Martin replied no, their policy states they will store the data for 90 days so they will not have to pay for extra storage. Attorney Davis added the reasoning for the 90 days is because that is what the state legislature has said they can do it for. The maximum is 90 days unless it is relevant to an investigation and there is a process to do that.

### **Roof Repair/Replacement at Old Fire Station No. 2**

Fire Chief Patrick wanted to further discuss the roof repair for old Fire Station No. 2. He believed the building has been put out for bid two different times in the past 10-12 years. In the last discussion, City Council asked for staff to get quotes on the cost to repair the roof. He referred to the three quotes that were included in their agenda packets along with a letter from Deputy Chief Hux, who is a contractor himself, recommending the proposal from Todd's Roofing.

He submitted pictures to City Council that he took of old Fire Station No. 2 showing the condition of the both the interior and exterior of the building. He reported they would install a rubber membrane roof. They would patch the holes or weak spots with plywood and insulation board over top of the rot then install the rubber membrane

roof, basically sealing the roof.

Councilwoman Bryant questioned if all the quotes were using the same materials because one quote was really high. Chief Patrick replied they asked the contractor to give a quote, but the contractor did not call them back and just went to look at the roof. That quote also includes replacing all the metal on the overhangs. The other bids do not figure in replacing the metal.

Councilman Smith asked if they knew how many weak spots there were to be covered with the plywood. Chief Patrick replied he did not know. Councilman Smith said he noticed on the Todd's Roofing quote it states he would install two sheets of plywood and he doesn't state what mil rubber.

Mayor Doughtie stated this item is on the Special Meeting agenda for City Council to vote on it.

### **Miscellaneous**

Interim City Manager Traynham reiterated the special recognitions of the retirees held earlier which accounted for approximately 81 years of experience. She feels as they move on in their careers they will see less and less longevity, but hope for it. She thanked those individuals for their service.

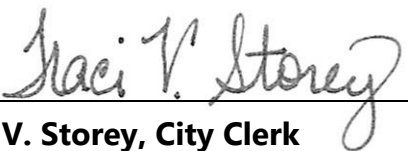
She reported currently there are some complaints about the community's appearance. There have been limb and refuse collections sitting on the alleys and roadways for extended periods of time. The City has experienced technical and mechanical difficulties with the knuckleboom trucks. Public Works has worked diligently to put things back together. This week the department is working an extra hour each day to catch up on that collection. She thanked Public Works for their extra efforts.

Interim City Manager Traynham said the Parks & Recreation staff is working with the Inmate Program to focus individual locations. The past couple days they have been out at CW Davis and Melody Parks. Those locations are challenging because they are very wet so much of the grass has to be cut with weed-eaters. Their next targeted location is Edward George Park. She thanked Mayor Doughtie for his grass mowing efforts there today. The City depends on volunteers to help make a big difference in the community. They cannot always rely on city staff to pick up litter and other things of that nature. Volunteer work and efforts from civic groups are much appreciated. They can contact the Parks & Recreation Department to express interest in helping out with the park facilities. After Edward George Park, they plan to move on to Emry Park and the crosswalk where the Roanoke Canal crosses Roanoke Avenue.

She announced the Centennial Park Clock Rededication will be held on August 26, 2021 at 12 p.m. More information will be forthcoming. The event will recognize the groups and individuals that contributed to the success of project to reinstate the clock and chimes.

Interim City Manager Traynham said the next City Council meeting is scheduled for August 17, 2021. She would be out of town that day and at this time there are agenda items. If City Council wants to have a meeting, she can participate virtually or they had the option to cancel the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

  
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**Traci V. Storey, City Clerk**

**Approved by Council Action on: September 21, 2021**