



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A Work Session of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, December 6, 2022 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 W. Bryant)
Tommy Daughtry)
Wayne Smith)
Rex Stainback)

Council Members

Kelly Traynham, City Manager
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director
Bobby Martin, Police Chief
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director
Davis Wise, Planning & Development Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director
Jason Patrick, Fire Chief
Tony Hall, Main Street Development Director

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

Motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and unanimously carried to add a Closed Session to the agenda to discuss a Personnel Matter as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6).

Public Works (Limb/Leaf Yard Loader)

Public Works Director Chalker reported he would like to discuss a piece of equipment at Public Works which is a Volvo Wheel Loader. On Sam Powell Dairy Road, the City has limb and leaf collection site. The leaves, limbs and yard trimmings are collected and stored at this permitted site. Part of the operation is to move these materials around. When the truck dumps them on the ground, they take this piece of equipment and push the piles up. Over the past few weeks, he has noticed the loader has been getting weak. The engine is starting to smoke really bad and last week the transmission stopped pulling. This wheel loader is a 1997 Volvo L50C with a 1 ¾ yard bucket. It has 8464 hours on it and is used almost

daily at this site. They did a top engine rebuild about six years ago. It is very weak, smoking heavily and has a slipping transmission. The City acquired the loader in 2003, but he was not sure how much they paid for it. He feels since 2003, the City has gotten its money's worth out of the machine.

He said if they started looking for a new machine, he estimates they could find a good used machine in the range of \$60,000 - \$90,000. He added during the staff meeting earlier today, they discussed the possibility of leasing a piece of equipment like this. He has not received any response back from that today. They were investigating all avenues. He wanted to give City Council an early warning about it. They have shifted another piece of equipment to the leaf/limb yard that they normally use on the street. They are moving them around to cover all the locations.

Councilman Smith asked if they could use the loader at all. Public Works Director Chalker replied no, currently it is in the maintenance shop because of the transmission. They had to pull it up on a trailer to transport it to the shop because it is not moving.

Councilwoman Bryant asked how much is a new loader. Public Works Director Chalker replied he estimates between \$150,000 - \$175,000.

Mayor Doughtie asked if he was asking for a motion for those dollars. Public Works Director Chalker replied no, he was just giving City Council an early warning. Somewhere down the road he could come before City Council to ask for a motion to buy a good used piece of equipment or if they find a lease to be a better cash flow situation. He reported the Public Works Department has not leased a piece of equipment since he's been here. They will be leasing a trash truck and he will tell them more about that in his report. This could be new ground for the City.

City Manager Traynham added this is one of the primary reasons, especially with a work session, where it is appropriate to bring up these needs that could be coming up. When it becomes an urgent financial need, City Council will not be surprised.

Mayor Doughtie asked City Manager Traynham if the City had to spend \$90,000 for this piece of equipment would that impact anything they have earmarked. She said she would bring it up at the time they make a presentation on it. They still have some funds that have not been earmarked per se.

Surplus Vehicles

Public Works Director Chalker stated through normal attrition, along with the arrival of leased Enterprise vehicles, they have taken several vehicles out of service. As before, they intend to offer them at public auction using the GovDeals.com auction site.

He reported thus far they have ten (10) vehicles and/or equipment on the list that they plan to put up for auction. They will bring it to City Council to take action on it. Once approved, they will put on the GovDeals.com website. They will set the time frame for bidding and if there is a minimum bid, they will set that as well. He noted Enterprise has expressed interest in looking at some of the surplus vehicles.

Public Works Director Chalker announced some of the police vehicles may be inbound. Once that happens, for every new vehicle that arrives, Chief Martin will be pulling an old one out. They are trying to purge the City's fleet of vehicles that are costing money because they are so old or in such bad shape. The maintenance costs should go down and they can use that savings to offset the cost of the leased vehicles.

HCIA Legislative Goals

City Manager Traynham said further to the November 16th HCIA meeting in Enfield where they discussed the upcoming legislative goals, they will find enclosed the 2022 Legislative Goals that were assembled by the HCIA. She noted the common goals are shared through all the municipalities and Halifax County rather than duplicate per local government. The end of the document shows some recommended changes which were provided at the meeting that show some deletions and rewording.

She called City Council's attention to the goals specifically for the City of Roanoke Rapids. She read the following goal categories the City submitted last year: Community Revitalization; Pedestrian Transportation Improvements; Transportation Improvements; Affordable Housing Initiatives; Early Childhood Care For Workforce Caregivers; Local Revenue Flexibility; Powell Bill Funds; and Economic Development Support.

She asked City Council for their input on any changes that may be needed to the City of Roanoke Rapids goals. The goals need to be submitted to Christina Wells next month. She also asked department heads to review them as well to see if there was anything departmental specific.

Councilman Smith stated he did not see anything on the Roanoke Rapids goals that need changing. He asked if the City Council had voiced their opinion on the I-95 Tolling which was one of common legislative goals listed. City Manager Traynham stated one of the common goals is the opposition of any tolling on I-95. She believed City Council may have taken a stance on that years ago. It has been a common goal essentially supported for a number of years now to prevent that from happening.

Mayor Doughtie said he did not remember why they opposed it so much. He was not saying he was in favor of it. He asked if it was possible to get more detail on why they were opposing it and why it would not be beneficial. City Manager Traynham replied yes.

Councilman Smith stated if you were able to charge \$2 from the Virginia border to the South Carolina border and the legislature allowed some of the money to come back to the county it would bring a lot of money back into this town.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he recalled tourism had some concerns about the I-95 tolling and then the second part was adequately distributing the dollars from that. That was an issue of getting their share of the dollars.

City Manager Traynham said they could get more information on it. She said when NCDOT brought it to them, a meeting was held at City Hall about 9-10 years ago and there was a lot of opposition to it. She did not believe there is an emanate action for tolling on I-95, but it is something that comes up every once in a while with the NCDOT's funding options.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated if they did do it, hopefully they would look at some electronic mechanism in doing it.

City Manager Traynham said she would like to reiterate the statement here because it explains more of what the position is on the 2022 Legislative Goals document. She read the following: I-95 Tolling Opposition - Legislative support is necessary to ensure that due diligence is given to studying the impacts before any actions are taken and to ensure that local input is considered.

City Manager Traynham said the next HCIA meeting is in January and she will need to submit the draft document to the HCIA before then. She asked City Council to reach out to her if they had any other ideas.

Miscellaneous

City Manager Traynham stated she has asked the department heads to provide some updates because there have been a lot of activities going on. She thanked all the departments and employees who have worked tirelessly in the last month or so. They continue to ask the employees to go above and beyond the call of duty. That requires time away from their family. As they come to the end of another calendar year, they are grateful and honored to work with such a great, giving staff. It makes Roanoke Rapids a great place to live. They saw that this past weekend with a lot of the events. She thanked everyone for making it a successful holiday weekend. She encouraged everyone to get out and enjoy all the decorations and lights. She also thanked City Council for their support and attendance at the events.

She asked for department heads to give a brief report and update on their department.

Finance

Finance Director Johnson reported the audit is complete and has been submitted to the Local Government Commission. The Sales & Use Tax Refund Report has also been completed. They will start working on a schedule for FY 2023-2024 budget meetings.

Mayor Doughtie asked if she was at liberty to discuss anything about the audit. She replied she has not seen the audit, but she does not have any indication that there are any issues with the audit.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chalker said leaf season is in full swing. Most of the leaves are down. They will collect the leaves on the street and then they will pick up the leaves in the back alley. They do the alleys last because that is where all the trash is that tears the machines up. Leaf season can run until February.

They have ground all the limbs in the limb yard. He invited City Council to come see that operation.

The vendor is expecting to get the state inspection on the City Hall elevator the second week in January. Once the elevator car is moving and is safe, another company will come in and upfit the car so that it looks more modern.

They are expecting the new, leased trash truck in the first quarter, somewhere between January and April. The same goes for the knuckleboom, but they are buying that piece of equipment.

They have received five (5) new Ford pickup trucks through the Enterprise Leasing program. They are on the street.

City Manager Traynham asked Public Works Director Chalker to tell City Council about how the employees feel about the new vehicles. He stated it was almost an emotional thing for an employee to get a new vehicle. They do not get a lot of new vehicles at Public Works. It is nice to get something dependable and comfortable to drive.

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he had one of the new vehicles and Public Works Director Chalker made a very good point about having a dependable vehicle.

He believes the Christmas on the Avenue keeps getting better and better. He was proud of this past Friday night. He estimates they had between 300-400 people. It was difficult to estimate because the people are in two different locations and are filtering in and out all

the time. The hayrides from here to 1026 Roanoke Avenue were packed from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Seeing all the kids writing letters to Santa with assistance from the parents and thinking about Christmas was special. There were well over 200 candy canes given out by Santa Claus to the little kids. There were all age groups that attended. He said the corporate sponsors, Roseburg Forest Products and Halifax Linen were very pleased with the way the program was set up and the programs that were offered. They have bought into this program. Roseburg is already talking to him about bringing in a large Christmas tree for the park next year. The media coverage and feedback has been positive. He said if they drive by in the afternoon or all day on Saturday or Sunday, they will see a lot of people taking advantage of pictures, walking around and enjoying the Christmas spirit.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported this year had to be one of the largest Christmas parades they've had in a long time. They had an estimated 125 entries. It was a long parade. It was a safe parade which was a major goal for staff. They had three EMS responses that were not critical. He stated it may be said that the Parks & Recreation Department puts on the parade, but every one of the department heads has a part in the Christmas parade. The City and City Council should be very proud of the teamwork that goes into it. He thanked everyone for their help.

He reported the Chaloner restrooms have been ordered. They are in the engineering phase at this point. In the coming weeks, Easi-Set will be coming to do a site visit. He will make Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee aware of when that is scheduled. He added all the colors of the restroom have already been chosen. The new swing set has also been ordered. They are waiting for better weather to pour concrete and move the shelter over there.

He said youth basketball is in full swing with practices and games going all week long. Since Halloween, Parks & Rec has been working very hard. He was proud of what products and programs the department puts out to the community.

He asked if they had any feedback whether positive or negative concerning the Christmas on the Avenue or the Christmas parade, please pass that along to the department so they can work on those things for next year's events.

Mayor Doughtie said he had several comments on the decorations at Centennial Park. He noted they had some volunteers that helped with security. He believed there were some with the Highway Patrol and Sheriff's Department. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said he had some volunteers that helped his department and they really needed them.

Councilman Bryant said her daughter and granddaughter were in town visiting over the weekend. They went to Centennial Park Saturday evening and her granddaughter who is only 18 months old did not want to leave the park. She was fascinated with the bulbs in

the trees. Her daughter also attended the parade on Sunday and even though she grew up here, she was always in the parade so she and her granddaughter thoroughly enjoyed it. She said it was amazing that the City has such a nice parade for a town of our size. All the comments she has heard were positive. She thanked all of them for their efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee echoed Councilwoman Bryant's comments. It was amazing and great to see the unity that was taking place. He was trying to keep up with his grandson and got a cold from Friday's hayride and riding in the parade so he'll have wrap up more next year. It was enjoyed by all. The other part was about the safety of the parade which was on everyone's mind. It was wonderful they did not have a major incident.

Main Street

Main Street Director Hall stated being the new kid on the block, he was always amazed at how well this city works together. He said that watching from an outside point of view and now that he is a part of it, he can see how well the many parts work. If you need something, you text or call and it's done for you. If you are in trouble with something, you send out a 911 and everyone comes to help. He was proud to be part of a team like this. He thanked City Council for making sure they have what they need to do the things they do. He thinks the community loves all the things that have been going on and he hopes they can continue to do that.

He submitted the Rural Transformation Grant on November 1st. Several departments worked together on the grant application.

On the November 17th they worked with the Planning Department and offered a Historic Tax Credits Workshop that was well attended. They do have two people that are following through to participate in the program.

On November 18th, they offered a Virtual Media Workshop on how to use social media to grow their business. He said many of these workshops are offered for free, but if there is a cost, Main Street tries to cover the costs. Whatever they offer the businesses and whatever they can do the help them, Main Street tries to make sure there is no cost to them. They just want them to participate and grow and let them know how Main Street can help them. The Small Business Center with Halifax Community College is great to work with as well.

On November 20th they held the Holiday Shop and Stroll. On that Sunday afternoon the Avenue was packed. It was a great event and the merchants were happy. They also had another successful Small Business Saturday. A lot of businesses extended their hours.

November 29th was Giving Tuesday and they did not make a big deal out that, but there were several businesses who participated in the program. The NC Animal Rescue,

Hannah's, Rainbow Rescue and local food pantries benefited from the businesses who participated in the program.

On December 2nd, they participated at the 1026 space. They had 227 letters to Santa. Santa is working on answering some of letters and then he will be forwarding the letters to the *Daily Herald* for their annual letters to Santa. The Halifax County Arts Council offered ornament making and The Paint Palette (Yolanda) participated. They did at least 125 ornaments. All this was at no cost to the citizens. It was a great event. He did not know the number of pictures that were taken at the "JOY" sign in the 1026 space. It was a very busy spot. The people really enjoy Centennial Park, day or night.

Main Street Director Hall asked Ginny Lewis with the Roanoke Valley Chamber to speak about the upcoming Gala. She announced the Gala will be held on December 17th at Kirkwood Adams from 6 p.m. – 12 midnight. They will have the Pizzaz Band who really puts on a very interactive show. They will have heavy hors d'oeuvres. They are partnering with David Dickens with Exquisite Occasions who also runs River Valley Catering and More. He will be helping decorate and providing the food. They were also partnering with Weldon Mills Distillery who will be in charge of the cash bar. They will have drinks catered/named for the area. Beer and wine will be available, as well as non-alcoholic drinks.

Main Street Director Hall said on January 3rd the new restaurant, Niki's Italian Bistro located in the former O'Aetos space will open.

He thanked the City Council members who do come out. Their presence in a business means more than they know. He welcomed City Council to go with him to talk and meet with the businesses whenever they have some time.

Human Resources

Human Resources Director Caudle reported longevity checks were distributed to employees on December 1st and Christmas Bonuses were distributed on December 2nd. These were approved by City Council in the budget. On behalf of all the employees, she wanted to thank each of them for that. Their continued generosity means a lot to the employees especially in these current economic conditions.

She invited them to the BARC Employee Christmas Luncheon tomorrow from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Kirkwood Adams. At the beginning of the event they recognize employees for their dedicated service to the organization. This year they have 15 employees who will receive Service Awards ranging from 5 years to 30 years.

She said most of them know she is a numbers person and data tracker. She is coming up on a year in this position. She shared a couple of things that are easier to say than put in

writing in a report.

- Since July 1, 2022, the City is having a better success rate at filling vacant positions.
- Current full-time employee head count is 148. Last year it was 128 employees.
- Currently advertising for the following positions:
 - Certified Police Officers
 - Certified Firefighters
 - Public Works Street Maintenance Worker
- Last year the City had 8 additional positions open.
- July 1, 2022 until November 30, 2022 (FYTD), the turnover rate City-wide is 11.8%. The same time frame last year they were 11.1%. Highest turnover rates are within Public Works and the Police Department. They are seeing turnover within all departments over the last 12 months.
- Since the beginning of this calendar year, she has made a very strong effort to conduct exit interviews. By the end of this month, she will have a full 12 months of data. Once she gets that, her hope is she can pinpoint some trends as to why employees choose to leave. She also hopes it will help when moving into budget season and when trying to recruit and retain employees in the future.
- Starting next week, the department will be working on the 1095-C forms which provides the employer health care coverage offered to the employees. One form for every active employee, every in-active employee and every retiree that had at least one month of coverage under the City's health care plan. This information is due to the employees by the end of January and the end of February to the IRS.

Police

Chief Martin announced they held the Christmas for Kids event this past Saturday. They had a tremendous turnout from volunteers including some students from the Early College. This year the department was able to help 45 families and will likely increase over the next few weeks. It has been a very good year with donors and sponsors so they had more to share. They were looking to potentially assist 50 or so families. He thanked everyone who came out and volunteered. He stated he really missed former Councilwoman Suetta Scarbrough this year.

He reported they have successfully installed 11 Flock cameras throughout Roanoke Rapids. Thus far they have recovered over 10 stolen vehicles from various states such as Florida, Washington and New York as well as several box trucks. During the process, the Sheriff's Office was able to apprehend a few where they seized drugs, money and weapons. It has helped the department solve 6-7 local crimes, identity frauds and thefts so it has been a very successful program. Local business owners donated \$30,000 to purchase the camera system. He will continue to draw the data and provide a more in-depth report.

He said they have four cadets that will be taking the State exam on Friday. They successfully passed their physical part and took their last test for BLET. They will be filling some of the department's vacancies.

Chief Martin reported they are on pace to answer 30,000 calls this year (2022). This is an average 2,179 calls per month which means each officer will answer an average of 68-72 calls per two 12-hour shifts (24 hours). That is the call volume they have. He acknowledged his patrol division, detectives, administrative staff. The new PACE Officer has been in place and has done a tremendous job with the school system. He been talking to students about bullying, different ways to identify good/bad touches, etc.

He thanked City Council for the much needed 14 patrol vehicles that are coming in. The officers are excited and looking forward to having something new with more space; they take pride in the equipment. He appreciates City Council giving them the opportunity to partake in this venture with Enterprise.

Fire

Chief Patrick announced last month (October) the department was out doing fire prevention. They saw over 2,000 kids between the different schools and tours coming to the fire station.

He said they have been running a number of fire calls and a lot of them have not been their own. They have been providing aid to neighboring departments. One big incident that could have been worse occurred about a week ago at Pelican Packing Plant in the Industrial Park in Halifax. They had a fire inside the warehouse. The sprinkler heads and the quick work of the firefighters with the Roanoke Rapids Fire Department saved the building or it could have ended up like QVC in Rocky Mt. The three sprinkler heads contained the fire which helped the firefighters get to the fire. There were five to six different departments on scene to help out. He noted the shredded plastic in the plant was reactive to water so that made it difficult.

Chief Patrick reported both new fire trucks have been ordered. They have submitted the first draw of the AFG grant in the amount of \$119,000.

He said next week, they will have two fire cadets coming out of the Nash Fire Academy. Graduation will be held December 14th so they hope to have them on the trucks in the next few weeks to help out with the shortages within the Fire Department.

He reminded City Council about the Fire Department Christmas party next Tuesday.

Councilwoman Bryant thanked Chief Patrick for the non-emergency visit paid to their

home last week. Two firefighters came by to check out the smoke smell they were having and even checked on their carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. Because of the visit, they found out their smoke detectors were long overdue in being replaced. The next morning, two other firefighters came and installed new smoke detectors.

Chief Patrick reported they receive the smoke detectors through the State and are happy to install new ones if needed.

Planning

Planning & Development Director Wise reported the following site plan reviews:

- Pizza Hut – Premier Blvd.
- Britt Commercial - Lot 10 on Hwy. 125
- Two building plans for the Roanoke Rapids Housing Authority
 - 200 Creekside Court
 - Becker Manor is doing a fire alarm replacement

He reported the following building permits have been issued:

- 4-bay at 304-310 Premier Blvd./Aspen Dental is part of that development
- NC Workforce Solutions- 1560 Julian Allsbrook
- Toyota Showroom – Premier Blvd.

Planning & Development Director Wise said OpenGov has been going very well over the past couple of months. They hope to start testing in the next two weeks. Kristyn Anderson is creating the permits; they have 10 of the 17 permits completed. Once all permits are completed, they will make a presentation for department heads and ask for their help in testing the system.

He announced the following updates for professional development:

- Kristyn Anderson obtained her NC Certified Zoning Official status.
- Marvin Wheeler is working towards his Level II Electrical. He was a new hire from Halifax County, so he has all his Level I certifications, therefore he is working toward his Level IIs.
- Minimum Housing Officer Roger Bell received his Level I Mechanical certification and is working towards his Level I Electrical.

Councilman Daughtry stated Sunday was his first time being a part of the Christmas parade in years. He said the parade was well organized and thanked every department for doing a great job.

Closed Session

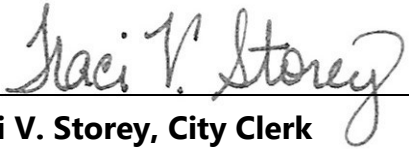
Motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Councilwoman Bryant, and unanimously carried to go into Closed Session to discuss a Legal Matter with the City Attorney as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(3) and to discuss a Personnel Matter as allowed by NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6).

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Minute Book Pages 21027 - 21034 contain Minutes and General Account of a Closed Session which have been sealed until such time as public inspection of those minutes would not frustrate the purpose of the Closed Session.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: January 17, 2023