



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, March 20, 2018 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)  
Carol H. Cowen)  
Suetta S. Scarbrough)  
Wayne Smith)

## Council Members

Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager  
Gilbert Chichester, City Attorney  
Traci Storey, City Clerk  
Kathy Kearney, Deputy City Clerk/Human Resources Manager  
Leigh Etheridge, Finance Director  
Chuck Hasty, Police Chief  
Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director  
John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief  
Christina Caudle, Main Street Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with prayer.

## Adoption of Business Agenda

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

Councilman Smith made a motion for Item No. 6 b) to be removed from the agenda, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt. Councilman Smith, Councilman Bobbitt, Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee and Councilwoman Scarbrough voted in favor of the motion; Councilwoman Cowen voted against. Motion carried by a 4-1 vote.

A motion was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough to adopt the business agenda for March 20, 2018 as amended. Mayor Doughtie asked if there was any discussion.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked what was the reason for removing Item No. 6(b). Councilman Smith stated the City had enough ordinances on the books now, so we do not need to put any more that the Police Department would have to enforce. He said this is outdoor areas where people ought to have the ability, if they want, to smoke or chew tobacco and as long as it is not inside a City building, he did not have any objections to it. He did not believe the City would be able to enforce it.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee said he could live with it being taken off today, but he believed Council needed a little more discussion on the matter at some point in the future to iron it out.

Councilman Smith stated that at the Ledgerwood ball field there are no smoking signs and they have very little problems with people smoking inside the field where the kids are; they go out to the parking lot away from the kids. He did not see where it was going to cause any conflict.

Mayor Doughtie said it appears this was a matter that Council had some questions about so they can discuss it at a later meeting.

Mayor Doughtie stated there was a motion and a second on the floor and called for a vote. City Council unanimously voted to adopt the business agenda for March 20, 2018 as amended.

<p><b>Public Comment (Scheduled)</b></p>
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**Leah and Elle Brewer**

Ms. Brewer stated how much she and Elle the pit bull appreciated their friendships at the Roanoke Rapids Fire Department. Elle visits the brave firefighters and hopefully eases some of the stress from their dangerous job of saving lives. She has enjoyed her role as mascot teaching fire safety over the years and has mastered “stop, drop and roll.” From the moment she placed her paws in Ladder 141 to getting her official patch, which she is wearing on her vest, there has been a bond between friends and many memories to embrace. She and Elle, along with the guidance of Chief Coggins and the entire Roanoke Rapids Fire Department, have been able to share a joint effort for fire safety education to classrooms here in our hometown and all around the country. She was truly thankful for their service to

the community and for their love for Elle just the way she is. Because of their kindness, and especially all those times practicing stop, drop and roll with Elle at the firehouse, she wanted to present them with a heartfelt gift of gratitude. She presented Chief Coggins and the firemen with a picture collage.

Chief Coggins thanked Ms. Brewer and Elle; he said they come by the fire station quite often and have been a blessing to the department as well as the citizens. He said Elle has been a servant and has a servant's heart. He stated he wished we could get people to love like dogs do, unconditionally. He said he thought Elle may be getting to the end of her working life. Ms. Brewer agreed and said Elle was 10 years old now and had been working in the Roanoke Valley since she was 2 years old.

Elle demonstrated stop, drop and roll.

### **Approval of Council Minutes**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilman Bobbitt and unanimously carried to approve the March 6, 2018 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as written.

### **New Business**

#### **Presentation of Wayfinding Signage Project**

Lori Medlin with the Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau stated she wanted to formally present to Council a Wayfinding Signage program for the City. She said her board graciously decided to fund a wayfinding system for the City of Roanoke Rapids using Roanoke Rapids occupancy tax. She said a wayfinding system is a signage system to direct visitors and citizens to key locations throughout a town or community. She said they have been working with City Manager Scherer, Planning & Development Director Lasky and Main Street Director Caudle to come up with a plan, a system and language for the signs. A lot of communities go out and hire a firm that can cost \$30,000 to design signs for them. They looked at firms and talked about it a lot and actually realized the City already had a language developed in the Entertainment District. They already had black signs there and a pretty system so why reinvent the wheel, why not continue with that system and add to it. She showed Council several sign examples. They started with the City seal on the first sign, but thought it may be too busy for people to see

from a distance so they developed a different seal with the high school and Canal Museum. But after looking at both of them, they decided the City seal looks better. They felt like the gold lettering did not pop so they outlined the letters in white. This was where they were today except they plan to lighten the gold a little. She thanked Brad Floyd with Express Signs because instead of going out and hiring a firm to come up with the designs, he has been at the table with them working on the design of these signs. They will bring a final design to Council for their approval before the signs are installed. She said the committee will meet in the morning with NCDOT to talk about where all the signs can go and most importantly what they plan to talk to them about was a welcome sign. They would like it to be as close as it can to the interchange when visitors come off of I-95.

She thanked the team with Roanoke Rapids and said she wanted to let Council know the project was in progress. She said the first signs will be from Exit 173 throughout the city. There will be eleven (11) signs and they hope to do those in this budget year and in the next budget year starting after July, the next series will be starting at Exit 171. The signs will be taking people to places like Ledgerwood Field, the Canal Museum and City Hall. She said there would be added signs for parking; there are eight municipal parking lots in the City of Roanoke Rapids. She believes the signs will uplift the look of Roanoke Rapids for visitors and residents alike and get people around in a very easy way to all the wonderful things Roanoke Rapids has to offer.

Planning & Development Director Lasky thanked Ms. Medlin and the Halifax County Visitors and Convention Bureau for their help and vision with the signage project. She said it was a way to encourage community and economic development. Signage programs are one of the more affordable investments that they can make in a community because signs are easy to put up and move around. She stated wayfinding was a process of determining a path or route in order to get from where you are to where you want to be. She presented photos of the existing signage and stated it was inconsistent and did not have a brand. The intent of this project is to create a signage plan that incorporates the existing signage destinations and have them more consistent and cohesive. She said for wayfinding signs, you can use actual signage and use of landmarks, but there are different kinds of information that's conveyed. She explained the different kinds of signs:

- *Identification* is typically a sign that designates where you are when you arrive.
- *Directional* points the direction or the distance of where you are going to go or places along the way.

- *Informational* is a parking sign or a sign that gives you information about the location.
- *Regulatory* signs are those that we typically follow for traffic such as stop signs and speed limit signs.

Main Street Director Caudle stated wayfinding signs are not only a benefit for visitors coming off I-95 in both directions, Hwy. 158 or from Gaston, but the local community as well because of the uniform brand and consistency. She said an example would be at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue; there are four (4) separate signs for public amenities. To be able to pull everything together and have one cohesive brand allows our community to be proud. It helps when visitors are here not only for tourism, but also visitors that are potentially coming to open a new business. All of that branding and the cohesiveness of our community can be seen through these signs.

She said as for the implementation of the project, they have had several meetings so far and it has been a great collaboration between the City and the Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Tomorrow they will be having a meeting with NCDOT; most of these signs will be located on NCDOT streets so they need their involvement to complete the implementation. From that meeting tomorrow they will be able to come up with an implementation plan. She said at the next City Council meeting or as soon as possible, the next action from Council would be the adoption of a resolution in support of the wayfinding system in Roanoke Rapids. Following that adoption, the City and HCCVB will officially submit this system to NCDOT and work through the permitting process to get them installed. As Ms. Medlin stated before, there will be ten (10) signs for Phase I implementation and encouraged Council after the meeting to look at the city map displayed showing the proposed locations of the signs. Phase I will direct visitors off of Exit 173, down Julian Allsbrook Hwy., down 10<sup>th</sup> Street and along Roanoke Avenue. Then Phase II that could start as early as July 1<sup>st</sup> will direct visitors from Exit 171 and push through all four corners of the community.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if there would be eleven signs in Phase I. Main Street Director Caudle replied they were looking at ten plus a welcome or gateway sign at Exit 173 (I-95 North). He asked how many would be in Phase II. She said it would be five signs and they were looking at a mini-welcome sign at Exit 171 and there may be additional ones. Again, it was all based on budget from the HCCVB using the Roanoke Rapids occupancy tax to fund the project.

Mayor Doughtie said he believed there were two signs at the other end of Roanoke Avenue and one on Hwy. 158 and Julian Allsbrook Hwy. He stated he really liked

this type of sign and if it was not cost prohibitive, he would like to see those signs with the same color scheme because of the uniformity and brand. He added he personally liked the lettering without the outline; it was easier to read. Several Council members agreed, they preferred the lettering without the outline as well.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated that was the purpose of presenting a resolution at an upcoming Council meeting so they can support the concept and brand to use as a template for the City as they move forward. They would maintain the same appearance and it creates that sense of place.

Councilwoman Cowen said she had a concern about putting the Roanoke Rapids High School on the sign because she worked for the school system for 44 years and they were never allowed to call it the Roanoke Rapids City Schools; they always had to call it the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District. This is because not everyone that lives in Roanoke Rapids can attend Roanoke Rapids schools. There are a lot of people that are sensitive to that.

Ms. Medlin said it seems to be the consensus here tonight to not use the new seal but the City's existing seal.

Mayor Doughtie asked if Council needed to take any action on which sign tonight or was this just for information. Ms. Medlin replied that the presentation was for information.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many businesses had given any information on the cost of the signs. Ms. Medlin replied just one; they did not go outside of Roanoke Rapids. He asked if it was going to cost \$750 to put each sign post up. Ms. Medlin replied yes and that was very reasonable compared to what they have been seeing in other cities. City Manager Scherer stated that the price includes manufacturing and installation. Main Street Director Caudle added it also includes the NCDOT break away pole.

### **City Manager's Report**

City Manager Scherer stated in the International City County Management Association (ICMA), National Ethics Awareness Month come around in March every year – and I believe it's a good reminder to stop and reflect on the importance of building and maintaining an ethical culture in every local government organization.

He said but the need for ethics awareness isn't limited to March. It's a year-round responsibility for professional local government leaders and directors as well as elected officials.

He stated the ethics principal is about respect for the law, not power. Both elected officials and appointed directors hold a public office. Their duties are outlined in the law, be it a state statute, local charter, ordinance or other. And all parties took an oath to uphold the law. Democracy doesn't function well when the rule of law gets discarded by those who swore to uphold it.

City Manager Scherer said with regard to governance and oversight matters, elected officials perform a critical governance role in providing oversight of the management of the organization. The door for abuse and corruption is wide open when directors play both the management and oversight role.

He stated arbitrary decisions are costly. An actual or perceived lack of fairness or equity in actions taken by a public agency, especially in dealing with residents, can create a real financial liability for the organization.

He said local government directors and managers have an ethical obligation to resist encroachment on their duties. There are real consequences to the organizations and the public they serve when they lack the courage to do their jobs. There is no place in the profession for a "go along to get along" mentality.

City Manager Scherer said for reference, I've included a copy of the ICMA's Code of Ethics with my report. I firmly believe both you as Mayor and City Council and all of us in the City Administration conduct their business in line with these tenets. "Playing politics" has no place in governmental operations. Sometimes it's good to remember that a public office is a public trust.

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

Finance Director Etheridge presented the February 2018 Financial Report. She reported during the month of February, the Finance Department issued 74 purchase orders, 75 payroll checks, 338 direct deposit vouchers and 272 accounts payable checks.

She reported for the month of February the General Fund year-to-date receipts totaled \$11,099,745.14. The percentage of actual monies collected of adopted budgeted figures stands at 70.6%. She said the General Fund year-to-date

expenditures totaled \$10,475,021.72. The percentage of actual monies expended of adopted budgeted figures stands at 66.7%.

She said after the month of February, 66.72% of the budget has been completed. As a result, the year-to-date revenues exceeded expenditures by \$624,723.42.

Finance Director Etheridge said the following revenues were received during the month of February:

- Ad Valorem & Solid Waste Taxes: \$1,777,877
- Sales & Use Tax for month of December: \$278,192
- Motor Vehicle Tax: \$58,259

She reported our last material allotment of Ad Valorem tax revenue has been recognized this reporting month, in February, for January collections. After this time period, we must begin review and watch our expenditures very closely in order to end the year with a favorable revenue to expenditure variance; therefore, not incurring a loss on operations at June 30.

She and City Manager Scherer began work on the fiscal year 2018-2019 budget planning process. Budget guidance was issued to staff on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Doughtie stated he liked this report. It appears we are about three quarters of the way through the year with our revenue and expenditures. It appears most everyone has paid their property taxes so we probably will not get anything out of the ordinary to come in the next two or three months. Finance Director Etheridge stated the City will still receive ad valorem tax collections, but not in this volume.

Councilman Smith thanked City Manager Scherer, Finance Director Etheridge and all the department heads for the way they all handle the funds the City gets. He said they all do a good job and to please keep it up.

## Departmental Reports

### Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Kearney stated they did not have very many openings this month. They are no longer advertising for the Aqua Zumba position; they are going to wait until the next fiscal year to fill that position. The department received two (2) applications. They hired two (2) people: Heather Pleasant (Administrative



Assistant for the Police Department) and Elton Edwards has returned from his one month from retirement and is working part-time at Parks & Recreation.

She announced the BARC Fish Fry Fundraiser will be held April 13<sup>th</sup> at Builders Choice (former ProBuild). Plates are \$8. A majority of the profit from this fundraiser goes to the BARC Scholarships that they give to employees' children that are graduating. The last couple of years they have been able to give two or more scholarships so they would like to continue to do that. She asked for their support with the fundraiser.

### **Police**

Police Chief Hasty presented his February report. Their internship program has increased lately; they recently attended a job/career fair at NC Wesleyan College. This summer they will have one definite internship from Campbell University who is majoring in Homeland Security; she will start in May. He has also had two inquiries from students from NC Wesleyan about doing the internship program so reaching out to these different colleges is having some return. These are unpaid positions, but he hopes this will allow the department to recruit good qualified people.

He said the department is preparing and getting the final plans together for the April 7<sup>th</sup> MLK Non-Violence 365 March and assembly. He also announced on April 10<sup>th</sup> ServePro, a new business in town, is hosting an Emergency Preparedness Forum at Calvary Baptist Church from 6-8 p.m. He said with the recent events in the area such as the bomb threat at HCC today, the bombs in Texas being mailed and there was another school shooting today in Maryland, it is something our community can do. There will be a lot of information on active shooter, bomb threats, medical emergencies and fire emergencies. He invited the public to come out and learn how they can be prepared.

City Manager Scherer recognized and commended Chief Hasty and his department for their professional actions in assisting authorities in arresting one of the suspects in the Alford murder case last week. They took prompt action along with other state agencies and were responsible for apprehending him with no issues or problems.

### **Planning & Development**

Planning & Development Director Lasky reported during the month of February several activities took place including a meeting with representatives from the State Historic Preservation Office to look at the possibility of reexamination of the historic

district as well as additional contributing properties that could be eligible for those benefits.

The department completed the 2018 Annual Boundary and Annexation Survey. They received the revised Sonic plans recently and are currently reviewing plans for two separate projects. One is a mini storage business on West Becker Drive and the other is a multi-tenant building on Premier Boulevard next to the Halifax County Visitors Center. There is an un-named drive-thru restaurant at this time, but other tenant spaces will be Jersey Mikes Restaurant, Great Clips Hair Salon and Mattress Warehouse.

She said code enforcement is reviewing the interior upfit plans for the new DrugCo. The shell of the building is currently under construction. They are also reviewing several different projects taking place such as Walmart for some major renovations.

She said tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. there is a minimum housing hearing for 103 Love Street. All persons have been notified and proper advertisements have been in the newspaper. Following the hearing, Code Enforcement Officer Donald Tart will develop a list of findings/actions that are required and do an assessment on what it would cost to bring the house up to code and determine whether or not if the house was dilapidated or deteriorated. From that the owner will be given approximately 90 days to bring the house up to code, depending to what extent which they will not know until after the hearing.

Planning & Development Director Lasky said the department received the Census 2020 addressing update information. They have several months go through and verify the addresses for residential structures within the city are correct before the Census sends out their mailings.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reported the repairs have been made to Aquatic Center pool heater. The pool temperature was back up to 85 degrees and they were back running on normal day to day operations. They will be busy in the morning as they start their classes.

He said he is currently preparing the PARTF grant for the Chaloner Recreation Center which is due May 1<sup>st</sup>. The Chockoyotte Concession stand project is moving forward, the walls are up and they are hoping for drier weather to complete the project.

He announced the Easter Egg Hunts are scheduled for this Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at TJ Davis Recreation Center beginning at 9 a.m. and at Chaloner Recreation Center at 10 a.m.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon said a couple of trees have blown over in the River Road parking lot on the Canal Trail. They are on the Canal Commission property and they will be getting those up. It may take some time because as a nonprofit they will try to get people who want to cut the trees up for firewood first and then hire a contractor to clean up the rest.

He stated soccer, baseball and softball are in full swing. The youth baseball opening tournament will be held April 21<sup>st</sup> and the youth softball opening tournament will be held April 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Public Works**

Public Works Director Chalker presented the February report. He reported they continue to work at 1026 Roanoke Avenue. They are currently building the concrete block wall for the second planter seat, then they will pour the remaining concrete along with the sidewalk to the alley which will line up to a handicap entrance/exit from the municipal parking lot behind the space. There will be handicap access through the space to Roanoke Avenue. The space is very close to being open to the public. Future plans with Streetscape will give a mid-block crossing on Roanoke Avenue.

Public Works Director Chalker announced the Julian Allsbrook project is underway with NCDOT's contractor, Barnhill Construction doing a lot of digging at Walgreens. This particular phase of the project would be going on for a while and he asked for the public's patience. He said the City has wanted this project for some time to get that roadway in better shape. They are resetting the storm drainage and preparing the grade for a future sidewalk to Virginia Avenue. He said they will continue to see narrow traffic lanes so please slow down and use caution.

Public Works Director Chalker updated Council on the winter weather forecast for tomorrow. He stated based on the last update he received, it should be snowing at 8 a.m. and this storm will be much like the one last snow they had; not much impact, if it snows at all.

Mayor Doughtie asked Public Works Director Chalker if the public should call the Public Works department with any questions or concerns about the Julian Allsbrook project. He replied they encourage the public to contact them if they do

not know who else to call. He said if staff cannot answer their question, they can connect them directly with NCDOT. They are happy to help citizens any way they can. They also have the contacts for Barnhill Construction.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the City still had the Government Channel. Public Works Director Chalker replied the City did still have the channel, it is channel 193 on Charter Cable. He said Human Resources Manager Kearney works really hard on this channel and has a lot of information on it. Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he feels more information like this should be on the channel and we need to get the word out that the channel is still there. City Manager Scherer stated they would put the information about Channel 193 out on social media.

Mayor Doughtie emphasized that Julian Allsbrook Hwy. was a NCDOT highway, not a City street.

### **Fire**

Fire Chief Coggins reported firefighters were engaged in 649 man-hours of training covering various topics. He stated the Inspections Division conducted 25 fire inspections and completed 2 plan reviews for proposed new and/or renovated businesses within the district.

He said in the near future, the department will be conducting live fire training by burning Billy Green's house in front of Manning School. He reported the shipping containers to be used for training props should be delivered in the next week or two.

He announced the department received two used treadmills that were donated by New Day Fitness to replace their dated ones.

He said they installed one child seat as well as helped change light bulbs at TJ Davis and Doyle field.

Fire Chief Coggins announced Engineer Carter and his soon to be wife had their baby last Thursday and Lt. Brandon Shearin and Megan's premature baby is still in the hospital in Chapel Hill and will stay there for about two more months until it reaches a healthy weight.

### **Main Street**

Main Street Director Caudle said an Avenue Streetscape Committee was formed the end of last year and they are meeting regularly to explore how they can implement some of the design elements Council approved when NCDOT will be here

for their resurfacing project in the next 12 months. She said NCDOT currently has that project contract out for bid. They will be meeting with the District Engineer in the next week or so to start discussing how they can implement some of the elements. The committee has put out to bid and they have a few fee proposals to use a third party consultant to take the design plan and turn it into something that has costs associated with each one of the elements. They can then work with NCDOT to figure out what could be implemented. From there they would be able to start seeking out some strong funding resources that could be used to install some of the elements while NCDOT was here. She announced the next Streetscape Committee meeting will be in early April.

She said business district activity, the V Clothing Store opened on March 10<sup>th</sup> at 1019 Roanoke Avenue. She also noted a women's clothing store at 1015 Roanoke Avenue closed, but within a month they leased the space to another clothing store called Fads Clothing Store. They are under business use permitting now and although she did not have an opening date, they should be opening soon.

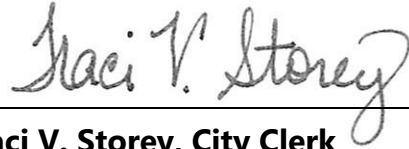
She announced Arts on the Avenue is scheduled for Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup> from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. in the 900 and 1000 block of Roanoke Avenue. This will be the third annual event that they do in partnership with the Halifax County Arts Council. The Arts Council and Gallery holds their high school art show that evening and Main Street pairs local artists with participating businesses on the Avenue and develop an art crawl. They are soliciting artists and businesses for that event. Main Street also takes a vacant property and pairs it with a local artist and invites investors or potential new business owners to the event. In the last two years, they were able to lease or sell a property to businesses that are now thriving on the Avenue. It is a great economic development component to this event. They hope to officially open 1026 Roanoke Avenue to the public that evening as well.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the old train depot was the same as the Copper Spike. Main Street Director Caudle replied yes it was the same.

### **Other Business**

Councilwoman Scarbrough thanked the City Manager and City Clerk for the outstanding retreat they had last week. She appreciated it very much and thought they got a lot of good information from the facilitator from the UNC School of Government; they put together a great retreat.

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci V. Storey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**Traci V. Storey, City Clerk**

**Approved by Council Action on: April 3, 2018**