



# Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

The City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids held an Emergency Meeting on **Friday, April 24, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.** in the first-floor conference room of the J. Reuben Daniel City Hall & Police Station.

**Present:** Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor  
Sandra W. Bryant, Mayor Pro Tem

W. Keith Bell) **Council Members**  
Andy Jackson)  
Rex Stainback)  
Curtis Strickland)

Kelly Traynham, City Manager  
Geoffrey Davis, City Attorney  
Krista Rourk, Deputy City Clerk  
Lawrence Wiggins, Police Chief  
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director  
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director  
Ashley Thomas, Main Street Director  
Kristyn Anderson, Planning & Development Director  
Richard Cook, Fire Chief

**Absent:** Traci Storey, City Clerk  
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director  
Kelly Daughtry, Parks & Recreation Director

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He stated the purpose of the meeting was for City Council to consider the adoption of a resolution opposing SB214 PART V, SECTION 5.

City Attorney Davis stated this was an emergency meeting. All members of City Council were present and proper notice was given.

He said one of the important powers of local government is the ability to exercise choices as far as local planning decisions. For example, when an industry or local developer wants to come in and locate within the county or whatever the local government entity such as the City of Roanoke Rapids, they would go through the planning and development process. The government entity would be able to review

and decide whether that going to conform to its local planning restrictions and to receive community feedback. It is possible under the general statutes for another county outside of the county the property is in to acquire property. Under the current general statutes, G.S. 153A-15, this outside county that wants to acquire property must have the consent of the local county commissioners. One of the important reasons, in my opinion, is that if a piece of property is owned by a local government entity, it's non-taxed. In a situation where an outside county, city or another local government acquires property inside another county, the property is removed from the tax base.

Attorney Davis thanked their State Representative Rodney Pierce. He was the one who started calling folks here locally to find out if anyone knew about this. They were all caught flatfooted. There's been no contact that has been made to anyone here locally that they can find to give us a heads up that this was coming.

He explained a local bill that was filed last year that made no mention of Halifax County or the issue they were discussing today. A local bill is something usually proposed by someone within a locality such as a county or city that is asking the General Assembly to allow them to do something that they can't normally do. There are some special rules about local bills and that is the Governor does not get to veto it. The local bill gets decided by the General Assembly and if it is approved, then it becomes law.

Attorney Davis reported that on Wednesday of this week, a representative he believed out of Johnson County pulled the old version of the bill and reinstated a new version of this local bill that included several different things that weren't in the original bill. The part of that bill (SB214) that is specifically relevant to Halifax County is Part 5. He read that section of the bill. "Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 153A-15, the County of Franklin may acquire, including by condemnation, real property or an interest in real property located in Halifax, Vance, and Warren County, without the consent or approval of the other county's Board of Commissioners." Essentially, if that bill was passed and became law, what that would allow Franklin County to do is to condemn, exercise the power of eminent domain, to take property in Halifax County. It would allow them to purchase, be donated, or to acquire property in any other ways that a local government can acquire property within Halifax County and also within Vance and Warren counties without the consent of the local county commissioners. That is a huge change from what the standard has been or what they've come to expect from local government law, from land use law, and the way this normally works. This bill was introduced on Wednesday in both chambers, came to vote and he believed the Senate passed it that day. They were able to get enough

opposition in the House that they tabled it until next Tuesday. This is the reason the City Council needed to call this emergency meeting.

Attorney Davis stated Halifax County is the front line of this, but as the largest municipality in Halifax County and possibly in the three counties, he feels it is important to show support with respect to this situation that could put the voters in. Everyone who is a constituent of Roanoke Rapids is also a constituent of Halifax County Board of Commissioners.

He said Halifax County Chairman Vernon Bryant reached out to Mayor Doughtie yesterday to consider this resolution of opposition. Last night the Halifax County Board of Commissioners called an emergency meeting and passed a similar resolution. Much of the text in this resolution mirrors that resolution. He believes other municipalities have been contacted and the Town of Halifax took action yesterday. He attended the County Commissioners meeting last night. County Manager Dia Denton, Chairman Bryant and County Attorney Rollins have made thorough effort to contact everyone in the other two counties affected by this bill to find out if anyone knew this was coming. It seems like from everyone they've heard back from that nobody knew this was coming. The thing that bothers him and the County is that they have not really received any response from Franklin County. Typically, before someone makes statements about how they feel about an issue, they go out and get all the facts. A big part of this is talking to the folks in Franklin County and finding out why they are doing it this way. Representative Pierce said when he questioned the people in the legislature on Wednesday, it was about water usage. There has been some discussion in Franklin County as far as their water needs because they are a fast-growing part of the state. He also knows that in Vance County, they recently approved a data center and if it is built will have needs for water as well. Everyone knows the geography of Halifax, Vance and Warren counties; there are several lakes used for recreation and water resources.

Attorney Davis stated this is not the only way they could have gone about this. It seems to be an extreme and blunt way to go about getting access to water rights up here. He could conceive several different alternative ways they could've gone about this that seems to be more responsible and to give the voters and the constituents that are impacted by a decision like this to have a say in what's going on. It bothers him that it essentially allows Franklin County to unilaterally make decisions over land use and the acquisition of property and completely cut out folks here in Halifax County. That's something he has never seen.

He referenced a recent major issue with Halifax County concerning someone that wanted to locate a mining operation. The way that this was written, it seems to him

that if anybody wanted to locate a mining operation, they could go to Franklin County and have them acquire it. All the back and forth and all the hearings, and moratoriums, Halifax County wouldn't have a right to be part of that. More to the point, the voters of Halifax County wouldn't be able to express their will through elected representatives. It's kind of an attack on the basic principles of representative democracy. Obviously, it is a very pressing issue. The City wants to manifest as much opposition and be heard as much as they can and join voices with Halifax County. He said Warren County was meeting this morning and Vance County was meeting sometime today. He has been impressed with the attention this matter has received in the public and social media. He has been impressed with the reaction they've had. He said attorney Melissa Dixon, who represents the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District, also attended the County Commissioners meeting last night. She actually published an open letter that he believes addresses these issues very well.

He presented Resolution No. 2026.03 and proposed City Council take action and approve this resolution of opposition. There was talk last night about sending a group of folks to the legislature on Tuesday. He and City Manager Traynham have reached out to their respective County counterparts to offer their assistance in this matter.

Mayor Emery Doughtie asked if in the event this bill did pass, would a lawsuit be the next course of action that these counties could take. Attorney Davis replied he was hesitant to project the future especially with regards to potential litigation, but he thinks that would be the only choice because if the House passes it, it will become law. It really does get to some foundational issues as far as the way that this process is set up. If this is allowed to go through, what it portends for the future of local involvement in development decisions. It may be that the courts are the only avenue at that point.

Councilman Warren Bell asked if the bill passes, would it set a precedent for the state.

Attorney Davis said at least as far as the text of this is, it's really nobody else, but Franklin County that has the ability to go outside of restrictions of GS 153A-15 and acquire property in Halifax, Vance, and Warren. Growth in our state is not even. There are parts of the state that grow leaps and bounds, and there are other parts of the state, like them that don't grow that heavily. There are parts of the state that are very wealthy in resources, such as us, and other parts of the state do not have those resources. It seems to him if this goes into effect and this is allowed and if he lived in a rural, low population, resource wealthy county, he would be worried about some of these more powerful, more populated resource poor counties looking to take

advantage of that. Councilman Bell hit on what does the future hold if this were to go into effect; other counties would try to do it too.

Councilman Bell stated certain regions such as the I-85 corridor where the power in the state is as far as economics and politics, but they are resource-poor in most of those places as far as land, minerals and those types of vital assets such as water and things of that sort.

Councilman Curt Strickland asked whether there is anything in the bill that restricts where Franklin County can take land. Attorney Davis replied there is nothing that restricts it. There's no other qualification; it doesn't have to be adjacent. They could acquire something in Darlington, in Moonlight or something in the completely non-contiguous part of the county. They say it is over water rights/usage. He can envision a lot of ways that they can give Franklin County access to that water that is not a blanket grant of authority to acquire property without the consent of the local County commissioners. What happens when developers see that and say rather than going and buying a nice piece of property in Halifax County and paying taxes on that, why don't they just go get Franklin County to acquire it and lease it back to them.

Councilman Stainback asked if any land was acquired for a project, who's planning department would issue the permits and what if Halifax County just said no to issuing a permit, where would that lead. Attorney Davis replied that was a very good question because that is something that has not been decided yet.

City Manager Kelly Traynham said typically when another county or government owns property in a jurisdiction such as in Roanoke Rapids. Halifax County owns property in Roanoke Rapids; the City's zoning authority still applies. Federal property is the only one that gets exempt from the City's local jurisdiction. It's not stated within this legislation. It goes completely against a lot of other rules, but that is a domino effect that needs to be taken into consideration. She did not think the planning associations have really had an opportunity to consider any of this as well.

Attorney Davis said he worries if this authority is allowed to go through that someone like Franklin County could take the position if the Board of Commissioners doesn't have the right to approve or consent, does that get them around all the local planning rules.

Mayor Doughtie brought up when Virginia Beach received the authority to take water out of Lake Gaston 20+ years ago and how that was more specific about water. Attorney Davis said there were conversations about it, the public had a chance to respond. The way this has been done, essentially overnight in an attempt to drive it

through. If the House had not tabled it until Tuesday, this could have been passed on Wednesday of this week without anybody here knowing it. He said they were lucky that Representative Pierce saw it and started calling folks and realized what the problem was. He stated they really have to give credit to both him and to the county officials for really jumping on top of this and making an issue of it.

Mayor Doughtie said he was disappointed in the people that were supposed to be representing them. They're all members of the County, but they are also members of the state although they are in a specific area; they still represent them all to a degree. Everybody that is up there should be intelligent enough to know what is morally and ethically right or wrong.

Attorney Davis said he felt it to be ironic with just holding celebration a couple of weeks ago in Halifax for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halifax Resolves. And now with this attempt to completely subvert the will of voters of Halifax County through this bill.

City Manager Traynham stated they could look online for the legislators contact information because the vote is coming up on Tuesday. She encouraged them to reach out to those representatives and make their positions known. They can look at the Senate voting record; they can see where the trends may lie. It's really important that they not only take action, but they personally reach out and make sure their voices are heard in Raleigh.

**CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS RESOLUTION NO. 2026.03**

**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 214, PART V, SECTION 5**

WHEREAS, the City of Roanoke Rapids is wholly situated in Halifax County, and moreover is the largest municipality in Halifax County both by area and population; and

WHEREAS, residents of the City of Roanoke Rapids have a vested interest in issues of land use, condemnation, and property taxation made by the Halifax County Board of Commissioners, evidenced, in part, by the fact that citizens of the City elect and are represented both by members of the Roanoke Rapids City Council and the Halifax County Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to G.S. 153A-15(a), before any county as a public condemnor acquires property in Halifax County by condemnation it must have the approval of the Halifax County Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to G.S. 153A-15(b), before any county acquires any interest in real property located in Halifax County it must have the approval of the Halifax County Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief, Franklin County seeks to deprive Halifax County of its statutory authority to consent to Franklin County's condemnation or other acquisition of real property in Halifax County, pursuant to pending legislation under Senate Bill 214, Part V, Section 5 which reads: "Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 153A-15, the County of Franklin may acquire, including by condemnation, real property or an interest in real property located in Halifax, Vance, and Warren County, without the consent or approval of the other county's Board of Commissioners"; and

WHEREAS, though it may be appropriate for a county to pursue local legislation for authority to take some action not otherwise authorized under the N. C. General Statutes, it is entirely inappropriate for Franklin County to seek local legislation that would deprive Halifax County of its authority under the N. C. General Statutes; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief, notwithstanding numerous inquiries by Halifax County, Franklin County officials have refused to discuss this legislation or provide any explanation or clarification concerning Franklin County's reasons for seeking to deprive Halifax County of its statutory authority under G.S. 153A-15; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 214, Part V, Section 5 represents an egregious, troubling and unprecedented overreach that undermines the principles of local governance and representative democracy, and moreover threatens regional cooperation and trust; and

WHEREAS, on the evening of April 23, 2026, the Halifax County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution similar to this expressing their adamant opposition to Part V, Section 5 of Senate Bill 214;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Roanoke Rapids City Council affirmatively and wholeheartedly expresses its support for the Halifax County Board of Commissioners in their opposition to Part V, Section 5 of Senate Bill 214 and joins said opposition; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Roanoke Rapids City Council joins the Halifax County Board of Commissioners in requesting that Part V, Section 5 be stricken from Senate Bill 214.

ADOPTED this 24th day of April 2026.

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Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

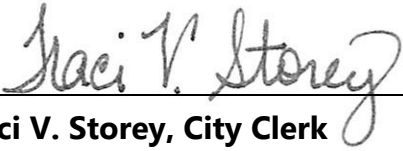
ATTEST:

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Krista O. Rourk, Deputy City Clerk

Motion was made by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Stainback, and unanimously carried to adopt Resolution No. 2026.03 opposing Senate Bill 214, Part V, Section 5.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Bell, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant, and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

  
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Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

**Approved by Council Action on: May 5, 2026**