



Minutes of the Roanoke Rapids City Council

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids was held on **Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

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
Traci Storey, City Clerk
Carmen Johnson, Finance Director
Christina Caudle, Human Resources Director
Ashley Thomas, Main Street Director
Kristyn Anderson, Planning & Development Director
Kelly Daughtry, Parks & Recreation Director
Larry Chalker, Public Works Director
Richard Cook, Fire Chief
Harold Phillips, Police Captain CID

Absent: Lawrence Wiggins, Police Chief

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Mayor Doughtie provided an invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Adoption of Business Agenda

Mayor Doughtie asked Council members if there were any known conflicts of interest with respect to the matters before them this evening and called for a motion to adopt the meeting agenda as presented.

There being no conflicts, motion was made by Councilman Bell, seconded by Councilman Jackson, and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda as presented.

Public Comment (Scheduled)

Ephraim Brodsky

Mr. Brodsky said \$2.1M is the gap between the City's fully operational budget and actual revenues. This budget raises taxes by 4-cents, which generates a little over half a million dollars. Now they have a \$1.6M gap. Any financial advisor would tell them not to use the fund balance to balance a fully operational budget, especially since they have done so the past two years. Any financial advisor would tell them that they need to make serious cuts. You can't afford to pay 150+ employees. It's just math. Simple math. You don't need a college degree to figure out that these numbers don't work. What happens next year? Another tax increase. What about the year after that? Another tax increase. Costs never go down. We all know that. We have yet to hear any new ideas from our city government, do all conversations happen behind closed doors? You might not like my ideas, but at least I've been offering some.

In every community, there exists a fundamental dynamic between givers and takers. The givers are those who shoulder the lion's share of our tax burden, they show up on evenings and weekends to coach youth sports, they staff our food banks and serve on our fellowship committees. They are the economic and civic engine that keep our community running. The takers are our less advantaged neighbors who rely on government assistance, community aid, and the social safety net programs that we collectively provide. Both roles are part of every functioning society.

Let's be clear about what our givers contribute. They fund our schools, our emergency services, and our infrastructure through their tax dollars. They volunteer thousands of hours annually filling gaps that the government cannot or will not address. They maintain the civic fabric through their participation, their resources, and their commitment to something larger than themselves. These are the people who make our community work.

And yes, takers serve a legitimate function in this equation. A compassionate society recognizes that people fall on hard times, that circumstances beyond individual control create need, and that we have a moral obligation to provide support. This is the social contract. Givers enable this support, and most do so willingly, understanding that a healthy community lifts up those who struggle.

But here's where the contract breaks down. When the givers receive nothing in return. Our city faces a \$2.1 million budget gap. You know what's not in this budget? Road maintenance. Not one cent other than the Powell Bill allocation has been budgeted for road maintenance. Building maintenance. Our department heads requested \$6 million worth of repairs that aren't being funded by this budget. And the only

department facing actual dollar cuts, parks and recreation. Let that sink in. The roads our givers drive to work are crumbling. The public buildings they funded are deteriorating. The parks where they spend countless hours volunteering to coach youth sports - cut. Yet somehow, we're allocating \$5.3 million to fund an optional municipal police department.

Now, I want you to consider something: without our municipal police department, we would be covered by the county sheriff's office. We already pay for that coverage through our county tax line. We're already funding law enforcement at the county level. As I have said many times before, we're essentially paying twice. Once to the county for coverage, we'd receive anyway, and again to the city for a parallel department that duplicates those services.

Is that \$5.3 million expenditure defensible when our roads have potholes that could swallow a tire? When our recreation centers need repairs? When our parks, the spaces that serve every resident, giver and taker alike, are being cut?

This budget tells a story about priorities. And it's not a flattering one. It says that bureaucratic expansion matters more than basic infrastructure. It says that redundancy is acceptable while community spaces suffer. Most troublingly, it says that the givers who fuel this community with their taxes and their time don't matter enough to maintain the roads they drive or the parks their children play in.

Our givers deserve better. Our entire community deserves better. It's time to realign our priorities and ask ourselves, are we building the community we want, or are we just funding the government that we've always had?

Public safety is an illusion. We don't need three parallel police agencies operating out of Roanoke Rapids. The state troopers write tons of tickets in town, and the sheriffs are more than capable of responding to our calls. As I drive through the streets of Roanoke Rapids, I see dozens of yard signs calling for Tyree Davis or Tracy Story in the upcoming sheriff's election. Every citizen with a sign has spoken. We want the sheriff to protect us. Give the people what they want. Fix our roads. Fix our recreation centers. Invest in our people. Stop the bleeding. Lower our taxes. Let the sheriff protect us. The givers have given enough. At this point, there's nothing left to give.

With my last 20 seconds, I included my tax bill here. I paid \$1,500 last year to the county. What did they give me personally? zero. I got nothing from them. All of their optional services they offer, the optional amenities, they're only open during normal business hours. I live and work in Roanoke Rapids. I can't make it there by 5:00.

They're not open on weekends. What are they giving me? Nothing. But I'm paying. We're all paying.

Bill Johnson

Mr. Johnson stated he owns and operates Bill's A-1 Used Appliances in Roanoke Rapids. He wanted to talk about a particular incident. He wasn't aware of police interaction with businesses when they had disgruntled customers. The incident happened when he was out of town. George Ball, who ran Sears for many years that they might know - between the two of them, they have 80 years of retail experience dealing with customers. George knows how to work with customers. He called him when he was out of town and said a customer was not just in there disgruntled but threatening him. At the time, an officer was in the store. When George calls, something is serious and if he says threatening, he believes him, and that was with police officer there. He felt so threatened, and there's that term perceived threat, he called 911 with the individual and police officer standing there. He didn't feel safe. He felt threatened. A couple of police officers did respond. He believed there was still a video of the incident on the internet. The customer used a lot of foul language and threats on the video and asked the officers to please shoot him; total disregard. It was a serious incident. While he respects the police officer there, he was very calm, very respectful, he didn't reduce or move the threat. Two police officers arrived. George called 911 and they did come. The only thing they did ask was about a warranty. They did not stop the customer from ranting, raving and threatening. He was there about another hour after the additional support came. He knows in a home they have a different authority than they do in a business, but still what if this was your business. He is responsible for the welfare of the people that work there as well as his business. He asked what can they can do? They asked for assistance but didn't feel like they were given any. He understands the policy of the City, the Police Department in particular, there are two schools. One school they follow is to allow that individual to vent all they want; they did a good job of that. A friend of his runs a business in Portsmouth who shared a similar situation. The fellow was arguing, not arguing, but demanding a refund. He has a no refund policy. That's his policy. According to the Attorney General's Office, whatever a warranty reads is whatever the retailer says as long as it's documented. The pictures show he has a document beside the counter that customers sign and accept his warranty; this individual did. But he still demanded a refund. He did not think he was within his rights. George refunded his money anyway to get rid of him because the police would not remove the threat. His friend in Portsmouth who had a similar situation and has the same warranty. The police removed that threat. He said he was open on main street; it's a business open to the public but if he was not mistaken, he can refuse service to anybody. He was not mad at the guy, but he does not want that attitude in his business or his home. He asked what they had law enforcement for if not to get rid of threats. He was not

doing anything illegal there, his business is open to any law enforcement agency at any time. If he was doing something wrong, tell him. He was just asking for help. He requested they reevaluate the policy of the law enforcement agency concerning disgruntled customers.

Public Comment (Unscheduled)

Mike Hedgepeth

Mr. Hedgepeth who lives on Franklin Street said he wanted to address what he read on RRspin.com about a week or two ago about this budget crisis they have here in Roanoke Rapids. His concern was about the statement that came up that the City of Roanoke Rapids was paying gas prices anywhere from \$4.01 to \$4.29 per gallon. If that's the case, that's the same thing he was paying as a retailer and everybody else in this room. He retired from education and part of his responsibilities was school bus transportation that included plotting where every single child lived in every single school district, every single area of the county and of the state and of the city. He said the transportation fuel came from state allotments. He knew that for a fact because he worked with it. He said if a local school district can purchase transportation fuel from the state under state contract, then why is the City paying \$4.29 per gallon. When he rides by the Highway Patrol, he sees them filling up their cars at their station, so he assumes they are on state contract. He questioned why the City is paying between \$4.01 and \$4.29 per gallon to a local distribution person and not getting a discount. If this is true, it needs to be looked into; there should be a different way.

Kimberly Laughrey

Ms. Laughrey stated she lives in South Rosemary on Ivy Street. To Mr. Brodsky's point, giver; sick of it. They have her giving to the point she can't even afford groceries. Her property has gone way up in value, and it isn't any better than it was 10 years ago. That is all strictly based on the poor decisions made by this Council with that Theatre. She understands they cannot go backwards, but they've got to go forward. They cannot keep shaking the secret money tree they think is in her backyard because she doesn't have it. She struggles every day to balance her budget, and she doesn't have an emergency fund. They've got to figure it out. Don't keep dipping into that fund. She asked them if they see all the towns on the news now. Every one of them is going under because they've been dipping into that fund. They don't budget their town like they budget their house. She doesn't have a money tree. Figure out how many people in Roanoke Rapids don't pay their taxes. Go get those absentee landlords that have allowed their property to go blighted to where they have people living in them doing who knows what and with whom. The property goes down and costs them more money because the police have to go there and clean it out. Firemen are going over

there risking their lives to go into places with no electricity. They can go to Food Lion to buy some eggs, if they can afford them and look at every house on that block that is boarded up with people sitting on the front porch like they own it. And nobody is doing anything about it. If they want her money tree; go get their money trees first. They need to balance the budget without bankrupting this town. When she moved into her house, she felt so safe in this town. Her father kept telling her not to move into South Rosemary. She did her research. There was no crime where she lived. Now she will not go out of her house after dark. She will not answer her door to anyone she does not physically recognize. They have got to get this town together. She understands that Mr. Davis commented on the settlement that he couldn't comment on the settlement. They don't call this place rumor Rapids for nothing. She said, "you leave a vacuum and everybody in this town has decided that every single one of you was in on something crooked. You probably were not. But you leave an information vacuum, and you do not provide some kind of information to the people, you get those kinds of comments."

Approval of City Council Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Bryant, seconded by Councilman Stainback, and unanimously carried to approve the May 19, 2026, Regular City Council Meeting minutes as drafted.

Public Hearing

Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed Budget

City Manager Traynham said during their last meeting two weeks ago, a proposed budget was put before them prior to the June 1st deadline in accordance with the general statutes. That budget has been under public review and the purpose of tonight's meeting as required by NCGS 159-11 is to conduct a public hearing to receive comments on the spending priorities of the City. They intend to receive comments tonight, process those comments and assemble them all. Then on Thursday the City Council has scheduled a budget workshop at 10:00 a.m. here where they will go through and identify revisions to the budget. Staff have been working since the last meeting to find some additional cuts and things that they will talk about. The purpose tonight is to receive public comments. The Mayor may establish time limits if he determines that to be appropriate.

She stated they are scheduled right now to adopt a budget on June 16th which would be at the next City Council meeting in two weeks. From there they will move into really looking at the next fiscal year and some challenges that lie ahead. This budget is

challenging. They have a projected revenue loss and expenses have increased dramatically. They know there will be some tough decisions that will have to be made in the future. They also need to really protect their interests and advocate for their state directed benefits. Looking at legislation that the general assembly is considering, they just learned last week that there's another new bill out for proposed legislation that would further reduce the sales tax revenues effective October 1, 2026. Again, paying attention to what's happening at the state level with their legislators and how that impacts their local revenues is significant. Over years and over time, they have experienced these cuts. They've experienced certain actions that the City has not in turn raised taxes to cover the deficit. Staff have been making cuts and cuts every single year. They are at a point now where they can't cut anything else without stopping an activity or discontinuing or changing the way things are done. It's a complex process. There's City employees and families involved. In all fairness there are some potential things they can explore but again it's about trying to maintain a workforce to sustain services as they navigate what they are anticipating in the future.

Mayor Doughtie opened the public hearing. He said they appreciate the turnout and community's engagement regarding the proposed budget. Because there are quite a few people here that signed up to speak and to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to address the Council within a reasonable timeframe, he implemented the following rules for the public hearing:

- Each speaker will be limited to approximately 5 minutes. They will be fairly lenient but try not to monopolize other speakers' time. A warning will be given 30 seconds before time is up and he will ask them to sum up their comments.
- If there is a group or repetitive statements, he asked they appoint a spokesperson to speak on their behalf.
- He asked them to direct all comments to Council as a whole. Please state their name and address for the record before beginning their remarks.
- They ask that speakers be respectful and concise. If they have written remarks, presentations or supporting documents they would like Council to review, please hand them to the City Clerk so they can be distributed to all of them.

He called on those who signed up to come forward and give comments.

Donna Patterson

Ms. Patterson said she doesn't believe the budget can be cut but thinks there are things that the City can do to raise funds before raising taxes, to save money and

improve things. She would like the City to consider the fact that food, gas, and rent have increased, but pay and minimum wage have not. Citizens, businesses, organizations, and churches can step up to help. She knows some already do, but many more can step up. Picking up trash, repairing homes, donating food, clothes and helping the elderly with chores, etc. The City code enforcement is going to have to step up their game and start fining people for trash, dilapidated buildings and houses. Code enforcement hasn't minded getting on her in the past. The City can give people notices to fix or tear down buildings. If they won't or can't, the City can take them to court. Either tear down the buildings or sell them to property developers or put liens on people's property to get the money back. She knows it's been a problem for a long time. It's a hazard and a waste of buildings for businesses. They need police and they are going to need more if more businesses are built here, such as the water park. They are going to need competitive pay and benefits. As far as the Sheriff's Office, she believes they are having a hard time keeping their own people because the pay is not as competitive as other places. They're going to have the new jail and will need guards for that. She thinks it's a good idea to have people sign up in the area for a security camera program. If they get enough to sign up they can buy them in bulk at a cheap price. The people would pay for the cameras themselves and have volunteers to put them in, that would help deter crime. Maybe that would save the police a lot of time and money. She does not think the firemen should be riding around in the truck to get lunch; that's something that could be cut out. She wondered how much unused property the City owns, and whether it could be sold or traded for something they need. She asked if prisoners could do some jobs because they probably do things cheaper. Negotiate with private companies to do a job: either take bids or offer what they would pay. Maybe this would lead to paying less to permanent employees for their retirement. She asked how often inventory was done in City offices, maybe this would help with losses. Change leash laws for cats. There are too many stray or feral cats running around and having kittens. Maybe get a low cost spay and neuter clinic here. Talk to the vets or get a vet in. It doesn't have to be a constant thing. It can be something like once a month or so. It will save money with animal control, and it will save money for the vets. Also, they carry and spread diseases and harm wildlife. They're a health hazard. Tourism can help and harm, but she thinks the good outweighs the bad. They are in dire need of a fish hatchery. Besides bringing up the fish numbers, it would be a great place for tours and school visits for learning. Weldon is supposed to be Rockfish Capital of the World. They have the lake and the river, and people could be coming here, but a lot of them have stopped coming here because they can't even keep the fish they catch.

Susan Barmer

Ms. Barmer said she had been a resident of Roanoke Rapids for the past 58 years. She has loved this town since the first time she rode down the Avenue. She and her

husband raised two children in the community, both educated in the district. Like many people here, they love to talk about Roanoke Rapids the way it was in the past, but she knows they cannot go back. They need to look forward. She was here to primarily support your consideration of Mr. Brodsky's bold alternative proposal on budget that raises our taxes. His plan includes the abolishment of the Roanoke Rapids Police Department with Halifax County Sheriff's Department assuming those duties. She admitted she was very skeptical of this idea, but Mr. Brodsky has a compelling argument. On the surface, one would question how could this work; this is absurd. But like most of the citizenry, she was not aware of all the changes in technology with local policing and the growth of the county Sheriff's Department. Mr. Brodsky did not just concoct this idea. It is being done all across the country, even in North Carolina. She is not an expert and does not know everything about this proposal but thinks that it's worthy of discussion and consideration. Mr. Brodsky took a chance on Roanoke Rapids and moved his young family to their town. He certainly has a vested interest in Roanoke Rapids becoming a thriving community. One of things that intrigues her about this idea is the fact they now have a strong county Sheriff's Department led by a capable sheriff. If anyone could take on this responsibility of policing Roanoke Rapids and make it successful, they could, under Tyree Davis's leadership. This just might be an opportune time to be bold. What resonates with her is the 27870-zip code has approximately 26,000 residents which is over one-half of the total population of Halifax County. She questioned whether Roanoke Rapids has received its fair share of the county taxes, she dares to say it has not. The City raises its taxes and dips into the fund balance. She knows it's a thankless job, but what were their plans for the next years, what would be different. All goods and services are slated to increase due to the inflation they are experiencing in this country. Therefore, the City's expenses will increase each year requiring more increases or cuts. She did not think they should bank on a water park that may or may not open in 2029 to save them. It's time for some forward thinking for the community.

Mike Hedgepeth

Mr. Hedgepeth said it is a disgrace that he cannot even get a pizza delivered to his house on Franklin Street because he lives in what is classified as a crime zone. He was born and raised here too. He did not know all the Council members, but he does know they need to represent the people of Roanoke Rapids and that they are doing their job. He was against taxes in any form; he is very conservative as far as that goes. He is not dumb enough to think the city, state, county and federal government can provide the goods and services they need without the citizens paying taxes. He referred to other cities and towns such as Raleigh, Cary, Wake Forest that are raising property taxes and now Roanoke Rapids is talking about it. He said the reason they do it is because it is a good source of income and they know they are going to get their

money. He stated if they were going to have any kind of tax, they need to have a city-wide sales tax. He is for city-wide sales tax because every single individual here any time they go to buy something they pay a sales tax. Everybody pays sales tax. He was sure landlords include their property tax costs in the rent they charge. He said they could go back and check the police records; he lives across from the Hilltop Trailer Court. For years it was nothing but a slum. He referred to comments made earlier about the dilapidated houses downtown. He talked about people hanging out at houses by Food Lion and said the house on First Street is nothing but a drug house. Everybody in town that's part of the drug "cartel" knows that is where they go to get drugs. Getting back to the sales tax, for 30 years he sat across from the Hilltop Trailer Court watching the drug traffic going in and out. Everybody in town needs to pay sales tax whether they feel entitled or not.

Kimberley Laughrey

Ms. Laughrey said she specifically wanted to talk about the tax. Their property valuations were crazy in the last go-round, and their taxes are just ridiculous. They have an old population that the majority of them live in very old houses. It's extremely difficult to maintain a very old house. It costs a lot. It's not a new build. Everything is not working right, floors aren't even, the walls aren't even and the crawl spaces are nasty, roofs need to be redone. When they raise the values so high and raise taxes again, they are going to have even more houses go into blight because people will not be able to afford the maintenance of an old house. Her house was built in the late 1930s. It costs her twice as much to have maintenance done as a new build in Becker Farms. She can't afford that if they keep raising her valuation and taxes. She wants to keep her house nice. She worked hard to get that house. She did not grow up here, she chose to live here. Her daddy worked for the City. She chose to live here because it was such a nice place with such great people with a great community spirit. That has gone. In her neighborhood, they stay in their houses with doors locked. She referred to Mr. Hedgepeth's comments on sales tax. If they get skin in the game, people care how their neighborhood looks. They have about 20,000 people who own property and about 8,000 who pay the bill; nobody has skin in the game. They have 15,000 people that are takers and get what they can get and they got 7,000 paying the bill. Those 7,000 are going to have to let their properties go because they're not going to be able to afford it anymore. She has a very old house that she wants to keep very nice, but the City keeps taxing her and she's not going to be able to. And my choice will be let my property become Madison, Monroe, and Henry Street or get out of town. And then you lose someone who is willing to pay their taxes. They cannot keep squeezing us. They've got to find another way to get their money. It can't be 7,000-8,000 people who are responsible and pay their taxes, footing it all every time you turn around. And do not count on a water park because they know how that went the last time. And that will also drive up property prices.

Ephraim Brodsky

Mr. Brodsky said he moved to Roanoke Rapids 4-1/2 years ago. He had only been here once prior to that in 2013 when he and his wife were still dating. They came here to meet her parents. When he went to her house, he said there's nothing here for me and he was never going to go back to Roanoke Rapids. But then something happened. Covid happened and it made their world very small. They lived in a small apartment in New York and that became even smaller with him working from home with two small children. So, his wife decided that she wanted a house. She wanted a better life for their children. She said she had a pretty great childhood in Roanoke Rapids so how can their kids have that childhood where they get to grow up with all their friends and have the same people, that continuity. He never had that growing up in New York City. They decided to bring them here; they took a chance on Roanoke Rapids. His wife said they could make a difference; they could make this place better. We could come. We could show up. We could volunteer. And we do. He said he doesn't see a lot of them out, but Kelly, he knows her and her sons. He knows Christina and her daughters because they have children the same age as his children. He sees them out doing all the things. He volunteers so there have been a lot of meetings he didn't come to because he was coaching basketball at Calvary on Tuesday nights for three months. He is a Jewish person but still coached in a church because there are not enough people coaching. In fact, for the 5th grade teams, they only had three teams because they did not have enough coaches. Each team had nine players so not a lot of kids got a lot of playing time. There are not enough givers here, but he does his part. He said he didn't love coaching, but he does it because there's not enough people to do it. He's not the only one. His neighbor, who owns a business in town has two children the same age as his children. He works 75 hours a week for his regular job and he coaches every single sport. His business's name is on every single building that is being sponsored in town and they do no business in town; all their business is in Wake County. He still sponsors and he is still showing up and showing out. It's the same parents coaching season after season and they aren't getting new people in. He said to several Council members that their children have left because there nothing here for them because they are not investing in the town. It's easy to go back and blame mistakes in the past, but they have to look forward. The Theatre debt is \$1M. This is a \$2.1M budget gap. Without the Theatre debt they are still in trouble; they cannot blame everything on the Theatre. This waterpark may be the new theatre. This budget is critically important. If they don't cut the police now, cutting it next year is going to hurt a lot more. Cutting it now would lose the \$3.5M and this is an election year. It gives the Sheriff time to scale up and show citizens what he can do before November. Because if he can't do it, they will have the opportunity to vote him out. Next year and the year after that they don't have that opportunity. He said don't sign any contract with Halifax County. He had the City Clerk send him every interlocal agreement the City of Roanoke Rapids is in and there no active agreement that

benefits the City. Every one of them has the City giving something away. Halifax County charges the City 2% to give them their tax money. The City collects the school's tax money but they do not charge them 2%. The County raised it to 1-1/2% 10 years ago and a few years after, they went up to 2%. He questioned if they were doing that much more work that the City needs to pay them \$200,000 to cut a check. He presented a challenge to City Council. If they want to draw from the fund balance, then they should give up their salaries. Anytime they are drawing from the fund balance to balance an operational budget, they should take a pay cut. That \$55,000 should go back because they are failing this city by not balancing the budget. They need to make it work with what they have, not with what might be. Thoughts and prayers can't save the day, but their decisions can. Their vote today matters more than ever. More than Drewery Beale's theater, more than any of that. This is the important budget for the future. This is it. This is what's going to decide it. Because if the roads keep crumbling and the parks keep getting cut, all the people like him are going to be gone. And then what's left? You know what's left? The people at Family Dollar saying, "Hey man, can I buy your groceries on my EBT so you could buy me a pack of cigarettes?" Because he gets that every time he goes to Family Dollar.

Troy Williams

Mr. Williams said he did not grow up in Roanoke Rapids. He moved here when he was about 17. He really loved Roanoke Rapids but doesn't like what it has become. They need to find a different way to try to raise money. He heard some of the things that people say about the taxes and he agrees. He's never really thought about that. But it's a lot of other things that they can do as far as city ordinances. He guaranteed if all of them got in their car and road to Food Lion, there will be somebody there smoking a joint and somebody parked in the fire lane. Two city ordinance tickets. His wife is scared to go to Walmart after dark or scared to go to Food Lion after dark. Even if they go there during the daytime, there's five cars parked in the fire lane. Everywhere you go in town, somebody's smoking weed. He doesn't even like taking his grandkids out in public because of that. He doesn't smoke it. But if people want to do it at their house, that's their business. But he should not have to ride everywhere in Roanoke Rapids and smell it. There is a lot of different ways that they can raise money. He has a couple complaints and a couple things he wanted to say about the last meeting. In the last meeting he listened to the City Manager talk about the different things that's gone up in this town over the past 10 or 15 years and the percentage they went up like 30%, 100%, 300%. His taxes went up 400%. He had four houses that went up \$182,000 in one year. In one year, an average house in Roanoke Rapids went up anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000. There are 6,895 houses, so he added it up. So if every one of those houses went up \$10,000, that's \$68M more money the City should be collecting taxes off of. He's being told the City is not bringing in as much money. He doesn't understand that. He lives on Hunting Ridge Road and

about 5 years ago, he was in an argument about the 3-story apartment complex being built beside his house. He did not want it there. Low-income housing in an area like that has never really made a neighborhood great. He has to smell weed sitting at his house in the evening time. People called the City Council members to vote for it before they even heard what the people had to say about it. He said the grass right now is very tall. When they proposed the project, they showed pictures of how nice it would be; it's a dump. It looks good outside, but people are out there smoking weed, people are throwing trash out and the grass is tall. He had to call the City three times last year. He also found out the building is 6-foot taller than it was supposed to be. When he called it to their attention, they asked him what were they supposed to do – cut the top off. But when he built his garage in his back yard, it was 6 inches too tall. They made him backfill dirt 6 inches to raise it up. He found out in the last meeting that the apartment complex may not be paying taxes because there's a loophole that if they are .01% non-profit they don't have to pay taxes. He keeps his rental houses up and keeps good renters and then they fight to bring in things that don't help the town. He thinks the sales tax is a good idea where everybody in this city would have to pay that. Not just the people that own a piece of property. Everybody would have to pay it. He thinks that they need to start looking into riding to Walmart, Food Lion, and Dollar General and every time they smell somebody smoking weed, give them a city ordinance ticket. Every time somebody's parked in a fire zone, give them a city ordinance ticket. He thinks those two things would help out this city a lot. He and his wife went to Orlando, Florida last year for two weeks. His wife went to grocery store down there 10 times. Look at the population there. They didn't pull up to the grocery store in Orlando and see five cars parked in the fire lane. They thought they smelled weed one time in two weeks. In Roanoke Rapids you smell it one time every day.

Joey Davis

Mr. Davis said he spoke two weeks ago at the last meeting. Talking about making cuts and this that and the other. He spoke about the Theatre, and lo and behold two hours after he spoke, it was on both news organizations that a water park was coming. He hopes the water park succeeds. They want to cut this, that, and the other and raise taxes, but the City owes \$5 million on something that was sold at a giveaway price, and they're having to pay for it.

Brian Forbes

Mr. Forbes said he was the Commander of the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad and a city resident and has been his whole life. He reminded City Council that the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad is there and is an asset. If they are struggling with budget for emergency services, Roanoke Valley is staffed largely by volunteers. He said they were still asking them for that 2-cent increase and he knows there are a lot of people here that don't want to hear that. He was willing to speak with any individual about why that 2-cent is extremely valuable for the city. They can turn that into much more than

they are asking in return. He reminded them that they are volunteers and if they lose the squad, they lose all the volunteers. Those same jobs they do will end up being City employees. They all know what that does. It hits the retirement system and makes the payroll go up. Speaking as a citizen, he thinks it's a good idea for the City to establish a budget committee. They are right here on the cusp of having to make a decision and not enough time to fix the size problem they have. Any major thing they do other than raising taxes is going to be a knee jerk reaction and he does not believe that is a smart thing to do. A budget committee could work on these things a year out. In the short term, unfortunately, he thinks they will need to raise taxes to cover it until they have a better plan.

Donna Patterson

Donna Patterson returned to speak a second time during the public hearing. She said that citizens need to step up to help themselves, the city and others. As far gas for the police and city departments, the truck stop at I-95 on the other side of Gaston has cheaper gas than anywhere in town. She doesn't see why the city is paying that price for gas either. Other surrounding towns are lower than any place here in town. She reiterated her idea for a fish hatchery and said there are grants and foundations to help pay for it; it would bring in money. She said the police officers needed more training to learn how to deal with teenagers. There needs to be random drug testing and fitness tests. She agrees with a sales tax idea that way everybody pays a little bit instead putting it all on one person.

Mike Hedgepeth

Mike Hedgepeth addressed the Council a second time during the public hearing. He said in reference to the entertainment center (Theatre), whether it was a good move or bad move, history would wipe that out. That is in the past and needs to be put behind them. He was a child when they formed the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad. The reason it was formed was because two students were home alone on the weekend and went up to the lake and drowned. Men who didn't know anything about saving lives volunteered. He can name people that have donated money and equipment to the rescue squad. He's sorry about what the rescue squad is going through in this budget thing. They don't use what they have or enforce what they have. He referred to the lack of enforcement on tractor trailer parking. As for taxes, they need to work as a group. City Council members were elected by the people of Roanoke Rapids by the district. The only person he has seen show up at his house in the past 30 years was Mr. Ed Deese. He could count on him riding through town. If they are going to pay taxes, then everybody needs to pay the same tax. No more freebies. If they are entitled to something, they are entitled to pay taxes, so pay with a sales tax.

Mayor Doughtie stated before he declared the public hearing closed, he would like to

say that this is by far the largest crowd they've ever had about the budget. Most of the time they don't have anybody. It always bothers him why the Council forms a budget and they don't hear anything. They've heard a lot tonight and they had a lot of really good ideas. He referred to the specific concerns raised during the hearing regarding taxes. Firstly, the sales tax idea. They worked really hard to try and get it. They went to the legislature. He, former Councilman Wayne Smith and the City Manager went several times. They were always told that the county had to be on board, and the county did finally come around, but they never could get it across the line. Regarding property assessments, he clarified that the City sets the rate, but they don't put the value on the property like he thought they were alluding to. He always thought the sales tax would be a good idea because everybody pays sales tax. It's the fairest tax.

With no further comments, Mayor Doughtie closed the public hearing.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Traynham thanked everyone for their comments in the public hearing. City Council will hold a budget workshop here on Thursday at 10:00 a.m.

She announced the Roanoke Rapids Static have started their home games here. They had games on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. They have a home game tonight and tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. The weekend generated over 1,000 paying attendees so she considered that a successful weekend.

She gave the following administrative updates:

Planning & Development

- **Hazard Mitigation Plan** – to be adopted by all participating jurisdictions by July 10, 2026 to renew the 5-year plan in compliance with Emergency Management agencies.
- **Minimum Housing Enforcement**
 - 312 Monroe Street – Declared unfit for human habitation and abated by Public Works. Eligible for securing/boarding on June 8.
 - 37 Henry Street – property eligible for securing/boarding on June 11.
 - 1015 Cedar Street – correspondence issued to initiate the process.
 - 109 Monroe Street – Follow-up inspection underway to verify restoration of water and electrical service.
 - 801 Vance Street – Compliance period has expired; property may be secured;
 - 117 Washington Street – Tenant plans to vacate prior to July 1; staff will monitor and determine next enforcement actions.

- Multiple minimum housing cases continue to advance.
- **NCDOT US 158 Corridor Projects**
 - Participated in NCDOT kickoff meeting for four US 158 SPOT projects focused on safety, congestion reduction, and mobility improvements.
 - NCDOT and Planning staff generally support evaluation of a Reduced Conflict Intersection (RCI) corridor along US 158.
 - Developing and comparing 4-lane and 6-lane RCI concepts with a focus on minimizing right-of-way acquisition and impacts to existing businesses.
 - Alternatives are being evaluated for the US 158/NC 125 intersection, including options other than the previously proposed five-leg roundabout.
 - Old Farm Road and Country Club Road intersections are being considered for RCI improvements due to operational and safety concerns.

Parks & Recreation

- **Senior Center.** Available now! Grant funding makes it possible to acquire and distribute box fans at no charge to eligible seniors.
- **Aquatics.** The outdoor pool will open Saturday, June 6 for the summer season. The Roanoke Valley Swim Team is collecting registrations until June 8, practice begins. Recently, our natural gas utility provider detected a leak in a line serving the indoor pool, the utility provider completed repairs that have consequently triggered a malfunction to the indoor pool heater – impacting participation in arthritis classes.
- **Library.** Summer Learning/Reading Program 2026 “Unearth a Story” begins on June 8 for children ranging from pre-K to 8th grade; reading logs and themed incentives through July 10. All participants are eligible to enter a raffle. On Tuesday, June 9 at 11:00 AM, a representative from Sylvan Heights Bird Park will host a program “When Dinosaurs Took Flight” and participants will meet a live bird. Program is free of charge and open to the public, please be informed that space is limited and available to first come first served.
- **TJ Davis.** Roanoke Rapids High School will host graduating seniors on Friday, June 5 for an all-nighter providing a safe alternative for celebrating. Summer Camps begin June 15 with registrations exceeding 100 kids to date and more to come!
- **Canal Museum –** A tour is scheduled on 6/10 (3PM) with a group from the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts from the Winston-Salem area.

Police Department

- **Project Lifesaver** was successfully deployed last week after a participating senior citizen was reported missing. For more info or to register your loved one, please contact the RRPD and/or Lt. Spragins.

- **Drone Deployment** – increased use of a drone on loan by Police Officer and Pilot Cooke demonstrating a need for in-house equipment.
- **National Night Out** is planned on the first Tuesday in August, annually. To maximize attendance, City Administration requests that the City Council move our regularly scheduled business meeting to the next day, Wednesday, August 5.

Public Works

- **Nuisance Abatement** was completed at 312 Monroe Street requiring 15 staff members at 4.5 hours of labor to remove massive loads of junk and trash. Additionally, 24 other abatement activities were performed.
- **Yard Waste and Storm Debris Transfer Facility** –
 - **Facility Compliance Inspection Report** – The Solid Waste Section of the Division of Waste Management (NC Department of Environmental Quality) completed an annual site inspection on May 28, 2026.
 - **Vegetative Waste Processing** – efforts underway to grind and haul away vegetative debris by a contracted vendor with the City.

Main Street

- Wave Makers youth program will be held next week (Mon-Thurs) from 9:00 – 12:30 at City Hall, as of today, 14 students are registered.
- **Liberty on Main** event on July 4 at Kirkwood is still accepting vendor registrations and developing a program for all ages.

Fire

- Completed annual hydrant testing

Mayor Doughtie said he received a call about an issue with the concrete at Emry Skate Park and asked if Parks & Recreation Director Daughtry could comment on what could be done about it.

Parks & Recreation Director Daughtry replied she had reached out to the company that installed the concrete multiple times, and they tell her they will come look at it but do not show up. Now, the company has stopped communicating. She continues to try and contact them. The park remains open for use and there is an event at the skate park this weekend hosted through efforts of Justin Kerr.

Councilman Jackson stated he sees the City departments are working on a lot of abatement issues and asked if City Manager Traynham could explain to the public what all is involved in an abatement.

City Manager Traynham said generally they receive a complaint and used tall grass as an example. Grass is not to exceed 10 inches. When tall grass is observed, a letter is sent to the property owner per the Halifax County tax records. The letter notes the violation and gives them 10 days to correct the violation. If the correction is not made when staff conduct another inspection, then the City abates it or mows the grass and assesses an administrative fee and labor costs. The City assigns a lien to the property. Sometimes those bills get paid before the property is assigned a lien.

She said under a minimum housing example, notification is given and asks the owner their intent to correct the violation. Sometimes it requires a significant amount of deed research to know all the parties of interest in a property. It can be one sole owner while other times many parties are involved. Notification must be made to all parties, not just whose name is on the tax card before they can take action such as demolition. There are times when a house needs repairs before it gets to a substantial condition. Substantial deterioration is considered anything 50% or more of the value of the structure. There are a lot of really old homes in Roanoke Rapids that have not been adequately maintained over the last 100 years. Generally, the costs to repair these homes exceed the value of them. Before any formal actions are taken, there is a hearing held at the property. All the interested parties are notified of that hearing. If they do not show up, then staff contact the police or public works to assist in gaining entry to a property. Depending on how safe it is on the inside, they may or may not be able to enter. The City cannot go in and fix these issues such as broken windows like they can by mowing the grass. The minimum housing code was created to encourage property owners to keep their properties up to date and find solutions. The issues that individuals experience to gain compliance is really an unmet need here. The City can send letters all the time, but if the owner is not physically able or financially able to afford to complete these things, they are at a loss. If the City moves to demolish a property, that becomes a lien on the property. They have demolition liens on several properties that they know the City will not recover. They may have heard her say they could bankrupt the City with a few demolitions that are needed and they do not want to do that. A lot of times the demolition costs are more than what the property is worth. They are contacted by people who are interested in a property then they find out there a \$40,000-\$50,000 lien or medical lien on the property so it stays vacant at that point. Code enforcement is a great thing, but it's mostly about education and trying to get compliance. People don't get in these situations overnight. Generally, life events lead to non-compliance. The process itself is under regulatory authority set forth by the state and the local ordinances support it. Some code enforcement is optional; they do it when they are not mandated to do it.

City Attorney Davis added they have this discussion about once a year. This is not

the first time this question has been asked for the public. He understands the public sees a yard that needs to be mowed, or a house that is falling in and asks why isn't it getting fixed. When they hear he or the City Manager talk about the logistical issues, he knows the public does not want to hear about that, they want to hear about how to fix it. It is important to talk about the different kinds of enforcement. The City cannot go in and just clean up a property. The property owners are owed due process which is the notice aspect. Secondly, there is a cost aspect to this. The City can't invent money from nowhere. They have to pay employees to go out there, pay for gas for the lawnmower, if there is debris hauled away, they have to pay landfill fees. That is the reason why it seems to take awhile to go through. There are two kinds of scenarios: nuisance abatement and minimum housing code. Minimum housing code is extreme. He explained there has to be a residence that has decayed to the extent that it doesn't meet minimum housing requirements. He referred to a recent situation at 1407 Forrest Street. City Council condemned the property and banned anyone from going back there.

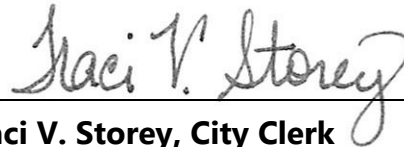
He stated nuisance abatement consists of trashy yards, tall grass, etc. The end result is the City cleans it up and puts a lien on the property. If the property is not worth that much, there is not a practical way to execute on that. Once the liens accrue the City has the power to go in the court and ask the court to sell it to try and recover the value of those liens. Normally the City doesn't have to do that. They have already spent the money on the nuisance abatement, then they try to enforce the liens which requires more costs and the chances of recovering that are very limited. In reference to the property at 2nd Street and Roanoke Avenue. Properties like that because of the way they were built and the materials that were used, they can't take a wrecking ball and knock down and cart it off. There are environmental concerns, there is asbestos there and regulations they have to comply with. That increases the costs of those mitigations. If the City spends hundreds of thousands of dollars knocking down a building, what do they have at the end of that; they have a empty lot. What is the value of a vacant lot on Roanoke Avenue? It is not going to meet the value of that lien ever. That is a choice City Council can make. They can decide to put more money towards nuisance abatement and demolitions. From a practical standpoint, they have to understand that there is no magical way to get the money they've put into the abatement back out of it.

He reemphasized that many different life events can result in nuisance issues such as tall grass. A property owner passes away and its heir property tied up in court or divorce can cause a property to be vacant for a period of time. Those liens usually get paid. Also, if there is value in that property, the County will foreclose on it. The costs for those abatements are given the same priority as a tax lien. Before any proceeds go to a mortgage holder or anyone else, the City gets paid its liens out of the foreclosure

amount. Many liens on residential properties that are not in a dilapidated state usually get paid. But commercial properties with structural issues are a more complicated situation. This doesn't mean that it doesn't concern City Council or they don't address these issues. They are doing it in compliance with the law and following the process in an effort not to cost the City any more money than already costs.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Stainback, seconded by Councilman Strickland, and unanimously carried to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.



Traci V. Storey, City Clerk

Approved by Council Action on: June 16, 2026