

ROANOKE CITY COUNCIL

May 4, 2020

2:00 p.m.

The Council of the City of Roanoke met in regular session on Monday, May 4, 2020 at 2:00 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Room 450, Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building, 215 Church Avenue, S. W., City of Roanoke, with participation by Members of City Council by electronic communication as permitted and authorized by Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.0(A)(3), as amended, Ordinance No. 41703-032720; and Resolution No. 41704-032720; with Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr., presiding, pursuant to Chapter 2, Administration, Article II, City Council, Section 2-15, Rules of Procedure, Rule 1, Regular Meetings, Code of the City of Roanoke (1979), as amended, and pursuant to Resolution No. 41490-070119 adopted by the Council on Monday, July 1, 2019. **The 9:00 a.m. session was cancelled inasmuch as there were no items or briefings for discussion by the Council.**

PRESENT: Council Members Patricia White-Boyd, William D. Bestpitch, Joseph L. Cobb, Michelle L. Davis, Djuna L. Osborne, Anita J. Price and Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr.-7.

ABSENT: None-0.

The Mayor declared the existence of a quorum.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Robert S. Cowell, Jr., City Manager; Daniel J. Callaghan, City Attorney; and Cecelia F. McCoy, City Clerk.

The Invocation was delivered by Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was led by Mayor Lea.

Mayor Lea advised that pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708 (A)(3), this regular session of City Council is being conducted by electronic communication means. The COVID-19 pandemic disaster makes it impractical and unsafe for a quorum of City Council to physically assemble in one location during this disaster.

Each Member of Council has accessed through the Zoom meeting platform and can participate in this proceeding. The City has provided the public with information to allow the public access to observe this regular session through live broadcast on RVTV, live streaming on Facebook and posted on YouTube. The City has provided notice of this agenda and process to the public on Thursday, April 30, 2020.

City staff, including the City Manager, City Clerk, City Attorney, and technical staff are present in the Council Chamber and are participating in this regular session.

To facilitate the process today to ensure that all Council Members and the public can follow these proceedings, I ask that whenever a Member speaks, including making a motion, to first state the Member's name then make the motion or second.

PRESENTATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: NONE.

HEARING OF CITIZENS UPON PUBLIC MATTERS: The Mayor advised that City Council sets this time as a priority for citizens to be heard. All matters would be referred to the City Manager for response, recommendation or report to Council, as he may deem appropriate.

Based upon Executive Order Number Fifty-One, issued by Governor Northam on March 12, 2020, Executive Order Number Fifty-Five, issued by Governor Northam on March 30, 2020, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), Virginia Code Section 15.2-1413, Ordinance No. 41703-032720, and Resolution No. 41704-032720, City Council will be conducting this regular session of City Council by electronic communication means without a quorum of City Council physically present in Council Chamber and without the presence of members of the public in the City Council Chamber.

In order to afford citizens an opportunity to provide comments to City Council during the COVID-19 pandemic disaster, citizens wishing to address the Council during this regular session of City Council conducted by electronic communication means were instructed to sign-up by emailing or by calling the City Clerk's Office at clerk@roanokeva.gov and (540) 853-2541, by 12:00 p.m., on Monday, May 4.

Those citizens, who have signed up to speak before the Council, have been provided the Zoom meeting information and will be allowed to join the regular session at this Agenda Item 3 and address City Council by electronic communication means. City staff will identify each citizen to speak and then that citizen may address City Council.

DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE PROCESS: Cesar Alberto, 1502 Rorer Avenue, S. W., addressed the Council with regard to the Governor's order concerning the Democratic Committee process.

GREENWAY CLOSURES: Ken McLeod, 506 6th Street, S. W., addressed the Council with regard to the Garden City Greenway.

GREENWAY CLOSURES: Stephen Ambruzs, 416 Campbell Avenue, S. W., addressed the Council with regard to plans to reopen the City's greenways.

CONSENT AGENDA: NONE.

REGULAR AGENDA

PUBLIC HEARINGS: NONE.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

ROANOKE REGIONAL AIRPORT COMMISSION: Timothy Bradshaw, AAE, Executive Director, Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport, appeared before the Council and presented the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission proposed 2020 - 2021 Operating Budget and Proposed Capital Expenditures.

Mr. Bradshaw updated the Council with regard to the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget and advised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic very few people were flying and a deficit was anticipated in the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2021. He also advised that the Airport Commission had been allocated funds under the Federal CARES Act, which would be used to offset operating expenses and capital projects.

Following inquiries and comments by members of City Council, Mayor Lea thanked Mr. Bradshaw expressed appreciation for the update.

(For full text, see copy of documents on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Osborne offered the following resolution:

(#41720-050420) A RESOLUTION approving the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission's 2020 - 2021 proposed operating and capital budget upon certain terms and conditions.

(For full text of resolution, see Resolution Book No. 81, page 32.)

Council Member Osborne moved the adoption of Resolution No. 41720-050420. The motion seconded by Council Member White-Boyd and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICERS AND COMMENTS OF CITY MANAGER:

CITY MANAGER:

BRIEFINGS:

Budget/Financial Planning FY 2020 - 2021

Robert S. Cowell, City Manager and Amelia C. Merchant, Director of Finance, briefed the Council on the changes to the FY 2020 budget and development of the FY 2021 budget process.

(See presentation on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

The City Manager advised that the presentation focused on details on balancing the budget, offered a glimpse of the enterprise funds in 2021, provided a review of the CIP and outlined next steps toward adoption of the FY 2021 budget. He reminded the Council of the principles used to end the current Fiscal Year which included continuing to fund and provide essential services, ensuring no harm to the FY 2021 budget, protecting staff resources and balancing the current budget based upon the current revenues and expenditures not relying on federal aid.

Ms. Merchant reviewed the briefing agenda and highlighted the following information:

Agenda

- FY 2020 Overview
- FY 2021 Development
- Enterprise Funds
- Capital Improvement Program
- Next Steps

She advised that the COVID-19 impacts unfolded daily and in terms of FY 2020 revenues, most local taxes were estimated in a reduced fashion for collectability, sales tax estimated reduction by 25 percent, transient occupancy tax estimated reduction by 85 percent, prepared food and beverage tax estimated reduction by 90 percent reduction, with a current expectation for local taxes for the remainder of the fiscal year at 4.78 percent below budget.

Ms. Merchant further advised of the concerns financially that revenues would be further impacted by actions of the Commonwealth of Virginia, totaling approximately \$17 million yet to be received from the Commonwealth and noted that the revenues were generally received in the fourth quarter.

She reviewed the FY 2020 approach, monitoring and planning noting the necessary expenditure reductions or delays of \$6.4 million, with suspension of recreation programs, suspension of library programs, employee furloughs, hold funding for selected Fleet replacements, hold funding for capital projects funded with one-time capital funds, departmental administrative reductions. She further noted the adjustments to funding for formula partners which included Roanoke City Public Schools \$3.8 million decrease estimated based on decreased adjusted local tax performance and Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge \$423,891.00 decrease estimated based on decreased transient occupancy tax performance; and pointed out that it was even more critical that the Department of Finance monitor revenues and expenditures on a daily and weekly basis.

Council Member Bestpitch inquired about the adjustment to the funding for Roanoke City Public Schools was still based on the 40 percent of the local taxes formula although those taxes were not performing at the level anticipated; whereupon, the Director of Finance replied that the formula was not to be changed and an average of what was still expected for the coming months was transferred to the school division on a monthly basis, but can be adjusted at the end of the year.

Vice-Mayor Cobb commended the Department of Parks and Recreation and Libraries for their creativity during the pandemic in offering online programming.

Council member Osborne asked about State revenue or disbursements and what the holdup was from the State distributing those funds.

The City Manager indicated that the City was awaiting action by the General Assembly or notification by the Governor of any changes and had no further guidance from the State to actions they were going to take with assurance regarding revenues to localities.

Council Member White-Boyd inquired if localities were entitled to the stimulus package; whereupon the City Manager advised that when the State decided how to use the funding received from the federal government, there was a possibility that the City of Roanoke would receive some of that, but would not use the dollars to balance the budget, close out FY 20 or prepare the FY 21 budget.

Ms. Merchant continued the presentation reviewing the FY local tax revenue assumptions and noted that it was projected that the impacts felt within the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2020 due to COVID-19 would continue into the first, second and potentially the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2021 depending on the local tax and how quickly it rebounded within the economy.

She reviewed the local tax estimated revenue and pointed out that the anticipated reduction in local taxes from Fiscal Year 2020 to the potential recommended budget local taxes is 1.15 percent or \$2.3 million reduction; and noted that nonlocal tax revenues were estimated to surpass the Fiscal Year 2020 adopted budget by \$670,000.00, for an estimated general fund total of \$297.8 million or a .56 percent decrease.

In terms of the strategies leading to budget adoption, the City Manager advised that needs included identifying expenditure reductions to make up for revenue and clear space for unavoidable increases in expenses that were or tied to an initiative; and noted that because of the uncertainty with the projections, a buffer or contingency was needed.

Ms. Merchant further explained that balancing strategies included funding the highest base supplemental priority services and programs, fund non-discretionary cost increases, prioritize remaining base and supplemental services, no compensation increases, and base expenditure reductions as necessary.

Ms. Merchant advised that currently the base budget was \$296.4 million with supplementals of \$3.1 million for a total \$299.5 million. She called attention to the Roanoke City Public Schools funding at \$82.7 million strictly driven by the 40 percent of adjusted local taxes formula applied to the local tax estimate.

She reviewed the supplemental expenditures under consideration; noted that many of the expenditures included right-sizing elements, some contractual, safety related, higher cost of operating and overhead related; and added that the current budget included a variance of approximately \$1.7 million.

Following the review of supplemental expenditures, she stated that the charge has been to develop a mechanism for closing the variance and preparing a viable course of action in the event that COVID-19 impacts on local taxes were even more substantial than currently noted; and in addition to closing the gap, departments identified viable expenditure reductions from their base budgets as well as supplementals to enable a course of action to balance the budget and create a potential contingency for COVID-19.

Ms. Merchant continued with the presentation by reviewing the enterprise funds and Capital Improvement Program and pointed out that for the parking fund, revenues for Fiscal Year 2021 were projected to decline by 12 percent or \$450,000.00.

Lastly, Ms. Merchant concluded that in terms of the balancing next steps, the revenue estimate review and expenditure updates would continue, subsequent presentation of the recommended budget on May 18, budget public hearings on May 28 for the General Fund budget, real estate tax rate and HUD budget, June 1 Budget Study and budget adoption on June 15.

Several Council Members commented with regard to the reduction in the funding allocated to Total Action for Progress (TAP) and asked if the funding could be restored.

The City Manager explained that the TAP funding cut was \$32,000.00 out of the \$160,000.00 provided to them in the past; and \$86,000.00 was cut across all agencies for a total \$115,000.00 which had to come from somewhere; and noted that if the desire was to level fund those agencies, the funds must be taken from another source.

Following further discussion with regard to possible funding sources, the City Manager advised that he would be happy to further the matter with any member of the Council.

Mayor Lea thanked Ms. Merchant and the City Manager for the informative presentation and received and filed the briefing.

ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR ACTION:

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HEAVY TECHNICAL RESCUE GRANT: The City Manager submitted a written communication recommending acceptance of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Heavy Technical Rescue Grant.

(For full text, see communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Osborne offered the following resolution:

(#41721-050420) A RESOLUTION accepting the FY 19 State Homeland Security Program Grant to the city from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, and authorizing execution of any required documentation on behalf of the City.

(For full text of resolution, see Resolution Book No. 81, page 32.)

Council Member Osborne moved the adoption of Resolution No. 41721-050420. The motion seconded by Council Member Davis and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

Council Member Bestpitch offered the following ordinance:

(#41722-050420) AN ORDINANCE appropriating funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) for Heavy Technical Rescue (HTR) Team for equipment and training and development, amending and reordaining certain sections of the 2019 – 2020 Grant Fund Appropriations, and dispensing with the second reading by title of this ordinance.

(For full text of ordinance, see Ordinance Book No. 81, page 33.)

Council Member Bestpitch moved the adoption of Ordinance No. 41722-050420. The motion seconded by Council Member White-Boyd and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

FEDERAL ASSET FORFEITURE FUNDS: The City Manager submitted a written communication recommending appropriation of Federal Asset Forfeiture funds for use by the Roanoke City Police Department.

(For full text, see communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Price offered the following ordinance:

(#41723-050420) AN ORDINANCE to appropriate funding from the Department of Justice Federal Asset Sharing Program and the Department of Treasury Federal Asset Sharing Program for enhancing law enforcement operations, amending and reordaining certain sections of the 2019 – 2020 Grant Fund Appropriations, and dispensing with the second reading by title of this ordinance.

(For full text of ordinance, see Ordinance Book No. 81, page 34.)

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Council Member Price moved the adoption of Ordinance No. 41723-050420. The motion seconded by Council Member White-Boyd and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

STATE ASSET FORFEITURE FUNDS: The City Manager submitted a written communication recommending appropriation of State Asset Forfeiture funds for use by the Roanoke City Police Department.

(For full text, see communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member White-Boyd offered the following ordinance:

(#41724-050420) AN ORDINANCE to appropriate funding from the State Asset Sharing Program for enhancing law enforcement operations, amending and reordaining certain sections of the 2019 – 2020 Grant Fund Appropriations, and dispensing with the second reading by title of this ordinance.

(For full text of ordinance, see Ordinance Book No. 81, page 35.)

Council Member White-Boyd moved the adoption of Ordinance No. 41724-050420. The motion seconded by Council Member Osborne and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None.

COMMENTS OF CITY MANAGER:

'Great Roanoke Camp-In'

- This month, Roanoke Parks & Recreation will host a virtual camping adventure called "The Great Roanoke Camp-In."
- This event will be accessible to the public on the PLAY Roanoke Facebook page, with participants invited to camp in their yards or within their homes.
- Because the event is weather dependent, a definite date has not been set, other than to say it will be in May. Staff will monitor the 10 - day forecast and watch for a day where the overnight temperatures are reasonable for the event.
- The week leading up to the event, PLAY Roanoke will release a series of videos to help prepare campers. More info is on PLAYRoanoke.com.

Star City Shout-Out

- Our Community Engagement Office is looking for ways to engage the community during the COVID-19 health crisis.
- To recognize and celebrate local people who are doing extraordinary things during this time, staff has launched “Star City Shout-Out” on the City’s Facebook page.
- Each Thursday, they will post a Star City Shout-Out for someone who has done something amazing to help the community.
- To nominate someone, send an email to starcityshoutout@roanokeva.gov.

Recognizing Citizen Birthdays

- The Roanoke Fire-EMS Department has started a special community engagement program: They are sending Birthday Shout-Outs to people in the community upon request.
- Citizens may contact Fire-EMS to ask this for themselves, a friend, or a family member, and a Shout-Out will be sent to their email address.
- This is a great way to build the relationship between our Fire-EMS personnel and the community, letting the people we serve know we care about them.
- To request a Shout-Out, go to roanokeva.gov/Fire-EMS, find “Quick Links” at the bottom of the page, and click on “Request a Birthday Shout-Out.”

RVRA Reopens Transfer Stations

- Citizens will be glad to know that effective last Friday, May 1, the Roanoke Valley Resource Authority (RVRA) reopened the Tinker Creek Transfer Station and the Salem Transfer Station.
- RVRA had previously suspended this service on Monday, March 23 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- These stations have resumed accepting waste from residential customers residing in the City of Roanoke, County of Roanoke, City of Salem, and Town of Vinton.
- Anyone exiting their vehicle while utilizing this service is asked to wear a facemask.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES: NONE.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: NONE.

INTRODUCTION AND CONSIDERATION OR ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

REVISED BUDGET SCHEDULE: Council Member Price offered the following ordinance to approve extension of the suspension of fares for transit services provided by Greater Roanoke Transit Company (GRTC), d/b/a Valley Metro:

(#41725-050420) AN ORDINANCE ratifying and approving the suspension of fares for transit services provided by Greater Roanoke Transit Company (GRTC) d/b/a Valley Metro; authorizing the City Manager to take certain actions; and dispensing with the second reading of this ordinance by title.

(For full text of ordinance, see Ordinance Book No. 81, page 36.)

Council Member Price moved the adoption of Ordinance No. 41725-050420. The motion seconded by Council Member White-Boyd.

The City Attorney advised that the governor extended the closure of nonessential businesses from May 8 to May 15; therefore, it was appropriate to amend the current Ordinance to reflect the date change on page one and in paragraphs one and two on page two.

Council Member Bestpitch moved to amend the current ordinance to reflect the date change from May 8 to May 15. The motion seconded by Davis and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

Council Member Price moved the adoption of Ordinance No. 41725-050420, as amended. The motion seconded by Council Member Osborne and was adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

MOTIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

INQUIRIES AND/OR COMMENTS BY THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL:

"TAKEOUT HUNGER": Council Member Davis announced a community project and fundraiser, "Takeout Hunger" spearheaded by Community Foundation Serving Southwest Virginia; with a goal of raising \$100,000.00, 100 percent of funds raised are for the purchase of food to distribute to vulnerable families and put in place the necessary restaurant relationships to access the needed prepared food.

THANKED ALL NON-PROFITS: Council Member Osborne thanked all non-profits providing exceptional services to families during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the Council of Community Services; commented that donations of cloth masks, baby articles, and other essential supplies are greatly needed; and asked community members, local businesses, and philanthropic groups to provide necessary essential services to those in need across the region.

PATRICK SHAW CABLE: Council Member Osborne also shared the sad news of the unexpected death of Patrick Shaw Cable, Chief Curator and Educator, Taubman Museum of Art; offered condolences to his family and friends; and encouraged citizens to complete the 2020 Census.

ROANOKE CITY DEMOCRATIC TICKET FOR ELECTIONS: Mayor Lea congratulated Council Member White-Boyd for receiving a nomination to run on the Roanoke City Democratic Ticket for elections to be held November 2020.

WEEKLY VIRTUAL PRESS CONFERENCE: Council Member White-Boyd thanked the Mayor and City Manager for hosting the weekly Virtual Press Conference and advised that conferences air live on Wednesdays at 3:00 p.m. on the City's FaceBook page, broadcast live on Radio at 102.5, The Mountain, re-broadcast on RVTV, Channel 3, on Thursdays and Fridays, and posted on the City's YouTube Channel.

Vice-Mayor Cobb moved that City Council meet in Closed Meeting by electronic communication means for the purpose of considering and discussing appointment of two Roanoke City School Board Trustees, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended. The motion seconded by Council Member White-Boyd and was adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Davis, Osborne, Price and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

VACANCIES ON CERTAIN AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES APPOINTED BY COUNCIL: NONE.

Vice-Mayor Cobb declared the Council meeting in recess at 4:48 p.m.

At 6:02 p.m., the Council meeting reconvened in the Council Chamber, with Vice-Mayor Cobb presiding; and all Members of the Council in attendance by electronic communication means, with the exception of Mayor Lea.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING: With respect to the Closed Meeting just concluded, Council Member Bestpitch moved that each Member of City Council certify to the best of his or her knowledge that: (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in any motion by which any Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered by City Council. The motion seconded by Council Member Price and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Davis, Osborne, Price and Vice-Mayor Cobb-6.

NAYS: None-0.

(Mayor Lea was not present when vote was recorded.)

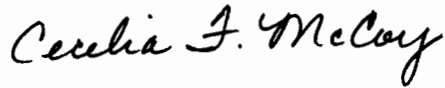
SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE INTERVIEWS: Vice-Mayor Cobb announced that City Council will interview seven (7) candidates for School Board Trustee through a Candidates' Forum to be held on Monday, May 18, 2020, commencing at 5:00 p.m. and ending not later than 6:30 p.m. The forum will be conducted through electronic communication means and the public will be able to view via FaceBook Live and RVTV live broadcast.

A Public Hearing to hear the views of citizens with regard to the candidates for School Board Trustee will be held on Monday, May 18, at 7:00 p.m. Citizens wishing to comment on the School Board candidates can sign-up by emailing or calling the City Clerk's Office at clerk@roanokeva.gov, 540-853-2541 by 4:00 p.m., on Monday, May 18, 2020.

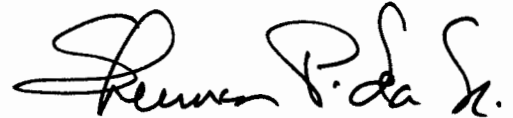
There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Lea declared the Council meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

A P P R O V E D

ATTEST:



Cecelia F. McCoy, CMC
City Clerk



Sherman P. Lea, Sr.
Mayor
