



ROCKY MOUNT, NC  
THE CENTER OF IT ALL

# Mid-Year Review

July – December 2019

By City Manager  
**Rochelle D. Small-Toney**



The City Manager's Office has been heavily involved in the recruitment and selection of key executive positions during this period. I appointed a new Fire Chief, Corey Mercer, a former battalion chief of the department. I also appointed Chris Beschler as the Director of Energy Resources and filled the vacated position with Elton Daniels as Assistant City Manager. Pay adjustments were made in the Electric and Gas divisions of the Energy Resources Department to stem the threat of our experienced and trained workers leaving city employment for jobs in the private sector. The sanitation worker documentary was first released publicly, after which the City Council passed a resolution issuing an apology for the city's unjustified position that its employee stole the items that were left for trash. The worker, Alexander Evans and others who boycotted this action were dismissed. City Council also directed that the administration compensate the workers or their spouses for those lost wages. Finally, we were engaged with orienting the candidates for Mayor and Council on many aspects of Rocky Mount city government that continued with those who were elected. The City Manager's Office has assisted the former and newly elected Council members in the transition of leadership.

I appreciate all the great work of our mayor, city council, assistant city managers, employees and staff. It is because of you that I have such great confidence in our future. We are heading in the right direction and have many recent successes to celebrate. I want to share some of the great work accomplished over the past six months by our employees.

As your city manager, in addition to my work achieving the goals of the City Council, I directly oversee six departments and two assistant city managers who split oversight of the remaining departments and operations. I hope this information provides insight into your government at work.

## **City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney**

**Budget and Evaluation Office:** Kenneth Hunter and staff successfully implemented the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Annual Operating Budget. The office also completed research regarding activity performance on the Rocky Mount Event Center and restitution to former employees who participated in the 1978 Sanitation Workers Strike in Rocky Mount. The office continued to provide research on demographic and economic trends and activities.

**Communications, Marketing and Public Relations Office:** The office conducted a Communications and Marketing Audit, evaluating all communication tools and processes. An internal Communications Council has been formed comprised of members from the department, as well as public information officers from Energy Resources, Fire and Police departments. The city's internal rebranding has been finalized and external rebranding is nearly complete, including the city's government access network C.I.T.Y. TV 19. To ensure citizens receive accurate and timely information regarding municipal services, activities and events, a study commenced into broadcasting city boards and commissions meetings as well as City Council meetings.

The office delivered 52 press releases, 307 Facebook posts, 176 Twitter posts, 21 Instagram posts, 22 LinkedIn posts and 52 articles via [rockymountnc.gov](http://rockymountnc.gov). The social media posts reached more than 16,000 subscribers and our electronic newsletters were disseminated to almost 6,500 readers monthly and growing.

The office produced a documentary highlighting the Sanitation Workers Strike and the film made its debut during an unveiling of a North Carolina Historical Marker.

**Energy Resources:** Director Chris Beschler and staff entered a Liquefied Natural Gas peaking services contract that allows the city to purchase LNG at times of peak demand at a fixed price. This will help reduce gas costs during peak times when pipeline capacity charges are at their highest. The department also obtained city council approval to enter a six-year contract to ensure the reliability of the city's 800 MHz radio system used by public safety departments and first responders. A complete rebuild of Substation 7, critical in supplying power to the city's Southeast area, was finished. Finally, a transmission line upgrade on Nashville Road that feeds Substation 7 was completed to enhance system reliability.

**Finance:** Director Amy Staton and the Finance Department ended 2019 with several upgrades, physically and electronically. The department underwent a transition from paper to electronic forms, most notably through purchase orders and payroll direct deposit notification. The department also implemented an automated timekeeping system to replace manual paper timesheets, which has improved accountability, efficiency and reporting. Downtown development projects continue including a capital lease approval pending with the Local Government Commission.

The Finance Department also worked to enhance Minority, Women Business Enterprise efforts, including training for purchasing staff, enhance solicitation and outreach workshops and training material.

City Hall underwent major renovations including a replaced wood ceiling in the George W. Dudley Council Chamber, renovations to the city manager's suite and fifth floor, as well as a new maintenance facility at the Rocky Mount Sports Complex and a new roof at both the Judicial Center and Senior Center.

**Internal Audit Office:** The office researched and responded to five employee complaints received through the Internal Audit office and Employee Hotline and one citizen complaint. Members of the office also served on the assessment team for three open positions and continued education on Risk Based Auditing conducted by professors at the UNC School of Government.

**Technology Services:** The Technology Services Department implemented an automated timekeeping system to replace manual paper timesheets. The new system improves accountability, efficiency, and provides better reporting. Also, the department led the transition from paper forms to an electronic automated system. New citywide technology training was offered and will continue throughout this fiscal year.

### **City Clerk's Office**

In compliance with North Carolina state law, City Clerk Pam Casey and the Clerk's Office prepared and advertised 14 legal notices and destroyed 180 boxes in the records center. The office prepared 22 agendas for city council meetings and as many minutes for Committee of the Whole meetings, while scanning 93,500 pages into Laserfische.

### **Assistant City Manager Natasha Hampton**

**Community and Business Development:** Interim Director Natasha Hampton and staff were active in revamping and administering grant and rehabilitation efforts. There were 89 very-low to low-moderate income residents who received preliminary approval for urgent and major housing repairs. In addition, 17 downtown façade grant projects were completed, and nine projects started. The department was active in holding first-time events, including the Downtown Food Truck Invasion, which drew approximately 4,000 guests and sponsoring the Downtown Bar Crawl and Small Shop Saturday.

To ensure these initiatives and events are well publicized, the department completed a full overhaul of downtownrockymount.com.

**Development Services:** Director Will Deaton and the department adopted the Atlantic-Arlington Corridor Use

Study and updated the city's Floodplain Protection Zoning Overlay District as well as the Land Development Code to improve parking within the Central City Area. The Inspections Division issued 77 certificates of occupancy, while the Community Code Division hired an Inspector for the first time in three years.

**Fire:** Chief Corey Mercer and the Rocky Mount Fire Department completed the N.C. Response Rating Insurance Classification inspection and received approval of an annual Compliance Report for Accreditation. Rocky Mount Fire also promoted 14 personnel including a battalion chief, three captains 10 engineers and a pair of senior firefighters. The department also secured purchase of a new records management system, with full implementation expected in March 2020.

**Human Relations:** Director Archie Jones and the department focused on internal relations by hiring an Employee Development Coordinator and completing a workforce-wide Employee Relations and Satisfaction Survey. A writing class for the Rocky Mount Police Department also was developed by the Human Relations staff that will now be a part of the RMPD orientation process.

Outreach events and programs included conducting a Hispanic Community Conversations meeting and appointing a Latino resident to the Human Relations Commission as well as a Renting with a Criminal History Workshop, and an annual Bowling with Disabilities Fundraiser. The Rocky Mount Area Youth Council also hosted the 2019 State Youth Council Mini Grant Conference.

**Human Resources:** Director Elayne Henderson and staff implemented internal inspections to prevent possible OSHA violations that could have resulted in \$12.5 million in fines. The department also provided reasonable suspicion training to 32 Rocky Mount Fire Department members. Continuing a focus on internal improvement, the department reduced the length of time between interview and start dates for new hires and redeveloped its new hire orientation practices, which resulted in a reduction of lost work time.

### **Assistant City Manager Elton Daniels**

**Parks and Recreation:** The Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with a grant from the Longleaf Foundation, installed a new playground at the South Rocky Mount Community Center. Golden Leaf Foundation also contributed a \$208,000 project that ended with the installation of a new boat ramp at Sunset Park. More than 10,000 people attended the 2019 Down East Viking Football Classic at the Rocky Mount Sports Complex. The complex also welcomed more than 300 teams as the home for the 2019 Top Gun Winter World Series baseball event and a lacrosse tournament with more than 50 teams from 10 different states competing.

The department's community outreach included co-production with Word Tabernacle Church of Langston Hughes' Black Nativity. Six performances drew more than 1,100 visitors to the Imperial Centre for the Arts and Sciences. The South Rocky Mount Community Center expanded its programming by taking students to the African American History Museum and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

**Police:** Chief George Robinson and the Rocky Mount Police Department implemented a pair of training initiatives; TRRUTH (Taking Race Relations and Understanding to Heart) and Human Trafficking Education. The first was established to provide employees with the necessary psycho-social skills needed to effectively mitigate conflicts and build trust with minorities, while the latter educates employees regarding awareness and recognition of human trafficking. The department also established an outreach program via the Police Athletic League for area youth ages 10-18 with the objective of mentoring and building relationships to deter crime and strengthen the community.

**Public Works:** Public Works Director Brad Kerr and the department finished the installation of the first phase of downtown Wayfinding signs. The department also finalized a beautification project at the intersection of Falls Road and Church Street and secured new contracts for solid waste hauling and disposal, recycling, and emergency management debris removal. Hires included Operations Manager, Streets Superintendent and Stormwater Engineer.

**Water Resources:** Water Resources Director Brenton Bent and his department initiated and secured the

Rocky Mount City Council's approval for approximately \$6 million dollars in infrastructure investments. Projects are ongoing. The Water Quality Services Division's laboratory section was recognized with a Certificate of Excellence from Environmental Resource Associates for achieving 100% acceptable data in their third quarter proficiency testing study. The department also promoted Amanda James as Superintendent. She is the first female Superintendent in the history of the department. Water Resources also prepared and distributed its first newsletter to support the city's effort to improve employee communication.

This work and these accomplishments help secure a strong start to 2020 allowing the City to begin the second half of the fiscal year from a position of strength. I very much look forward to continuing our advancement of community well-being and quality of life for Rocky Mount's citizens.