

Galax City Council

Minutes

May 8, 2017

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on May 8, 2017 at 7:30 pm.

At 7:30 p.m. Mayor Mitchell called the meeting to order with the following Council persons present and they are as listed: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis and Councilman Helmick. Councilman Garner was absent.

Mayor Mitchell prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Mayor Greene made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on April 24, 2017. Councilman Helmick noted a correction on the minutes of April 24, 2017. Councilman Helmick is noted as absent for the meeting but is also noted as certifying on the closed session. With the correction, Councilman Helmick seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick – yea.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date advertised for the Public Hearing of the FY2018 Galax City Schools Budget and he opened the public hearing at 7:32 PM. Mr. Sturgill, School Superintendent, was invited to the podium and gave a brief overview of the budget. He noted that there was a change to the debt service based on conversations with City staff. Mr. Barker informed Council that due to the possible refinancing of the current literary loans for the Galax Elementary School project and the turf field project, the debt service is unknown at this time. After consulting with the City auditing firm, Robinson Famer Cox, they recommended that we remove the debt service from the school budget as it is shown on the City budget and we are ultimately responsible for it. The budget as presented was for a total operating funds of \$15,131,030 and local operating funds of \$3,986,291. Councilman Helmick asked Mr. Sturgill about the increase in insurance costs. Mr. Sturgill informed Council that the increase was negotiated from over 13% to 9.5% and will be shared by the system and staff. All staff will receive a 1% raise, however their take home pay may decrease due to changes in insurance costs. Mr. Helmick asked for an explanation of how funds beyond the local required effort are spent. Mr. Sturgill could not offer specifics but did note that those fund support additional staff beyond the state minimum, fund an engineering and robotics program, fund the ROTC program, etc. Councilman Helmick asked how much of the budget is designated for the capital account. Mr. Sturgill said none is budgeted for that, however if they are able to underspend by 1% - 2%, that may permit them to carry over \$200,000 - \$300,000 towards that account. A brief overview of the capital account and its history was provided by Mr. Sturgill and Mayor Mitchell and it was noted that some of those funds have come back to assist the City with specific capital project. Councilman Helmick asked Mr. Sturgill about the plans for the property originally purchased for an elementary school. Mr. Sturgill responded that the property was purchased approximately 3 years ago and the school board felt it could be sold at a higher value if needed, but plans are being discussed by the City on possible uses for the property. Councilman Davis stated that both of his children attend and graduated from Galax and he appreciated the work of the school board and Mr. Sturgill. He stated that he felt the capital account works in its current form.

There being no further comment, Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed at 7:52 PM. Councilman Davis made the motion to approve the FY2018 School Budget of \$15,131,030 with \$3,986,291 in local operating funds and no debt service and the schools that they must present an amended budget by the December 2017 meeting for consideration due to the changes in debt service. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Crouse and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick - yea.

Mr. Barker informed Council that advertisements are running for the Library Board and IDA appointments. He informed Council that the following individuals have agreed to reappointment on the boards they service:

- WCC Board – Janet Nuckolls (4 years)
- IDA – Susie Garner, Ed Hanks, Roger Neal, Nathan Smith (4 years)
- Planning Commission – Brandon Boyles, Roger Martin, Rita Reeves (4 years)
- Board of Zoning Appeals – David Stone (3 years)
- Recreation Advisory Board – William Suite, Jennifer Morris (2 years)

Councilwoman Crouse made the motion to approve the recommendation of staff. Vice-Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick - yea.

Mayor Mitchell welcomed Ms. Michie-Salter, CEO of the Life Center, to speak about the Life Center operations and changes to their intake and patient management. Ms. Michie-Salter recognized other Life Center staff in attendance, as well as partner agencies that they have worked with. Ms. Michie-Salter gave an overview of the operations at the Life Center and what changes she has implemented upon her arrival, and additional changes since an issue occurred with a patient leaving the facility recently. An overview of a TDO (Temporary Detention Order) was explained and how those patients come to the Life Center and when they are deferred elsewhere. Since April and with a new protocol in place on how patients are considered, 9 TDO's have been denied admittance. Ms. Michie-Salter informed Council that the Life Center is planning on putting up a fence around the perimeter of the property, however it will be something that works within the neighborhood and renderings will be provided to Mr. Barker for distribution to Council. She did stress that they do want to be good community neighbors and are always available for discussion. Ms. Jadow spoke from the audience with a question concerning a recent event where a patient came to her house. Ms. Michie-Salter gave a description of what happened with that event and said they are taking steps to try and prevent that in the future. Mayor Mitchell thanked Ms. Michie-Salter for speaking and felt it was a productive discussion and presentation to Council.

City Council was asked to set May 22, 2017 as the date to hold the public hearing on the City of Galax FY2018 budget. The budget does show a tax increase for the proposed Galax Elementary School Project. No other tax increases are listed. The budget also shows a water/sewer utility rate increase for the Galax Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrades. Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the public hearing date. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Crouse and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick - yea.

Council was presented with a draft revision to City Code section 153-36 concerning water and sewer rates. In order to proceed with the Galax Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrades, the City must increase our operating funds sufficiently to include new debt service for the project and capital reserve funds. Councilwoman Crouse made the motion to set May 22, 2017 as the public hearing date for the revisions to City Code Section 153-36 concerning water/sewer rates. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Greene and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick - yea.

Mayor Mitchell recognized citizens from the audience that wished to speak.

The director of Hope House, Tammy Harmon, spoke about the partnership they have with the Life Center and the individuals that the Hope House serves. They currently have 2 locations in Galax and will provide services to 14 – 17 men at a given time and less women. A typical stay is 90 – 120 days but all residents must have a job within 30 days. They also assist in relocation from the Hope House.

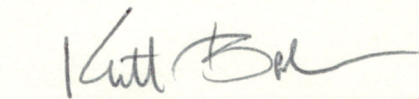
Councilman Helmick asked that since we are purchasing new voting equipment, that consideration of moving the council elections to November be placed on the agenda for the next council meeting. Mayor Mitchell spoke about issues with local elections being mixed with fall elections and how local issues become more politicized. After discussion, Mr. Barer was asked to place that on the next agenda.

Ms. Jill Burcham from PUSH Ministries spoke about the programs and assistance that they offer to disadvantaged citizens in our area. They currently provide financial assistance and offer transport services to doctor's appointments.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:30 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

