

Galax City Council  
Minutes  
June 12, 2017

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on June 12, 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, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.

Councilwoman Plichta prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Mitchell and Council gave special recognition to the following attendees:

- Galax Water Treatment Plant Award – Mike Brown, Chief Operator at the Galax Water Treatment Plant, was present to accept a 2016 Silver Award for water filtration and backwash which was awarded by the Virginia Department of Health.
- Galax Police Department Accreditation – DCJS Accreditation Program Manager, Derrick Mays, was present to formally present Chief Rick Clark and Captain James Cox with the department's 5<sup>th</sup> re-accreditation. The department scored 100 on the overall review.
- Galax Police Department Zero Fatalities Recognition – The GPD was recently recognized by the Virginia Highway Safety Summit for having zero motor vehicle fatalities within the City limits in 2016. The recognition reflects the traffic enforcement and visibility the department provides, as well as addressing traffic speed and congestion issues. Chief Clark was asked if the positive results of zero deaths were a direct effect of the lowered speed limit on East Stuart drive. Chief Clark said he felt it was and thanked Council for approving the decision to change the speed limit four years ago.
- Eagle Scout Recognition – Doug Barr, a leader from Boy Scout Troop #424 was present along with Chandler McChesney, who recently earned his designation as Eagle Scout. Nicholas Barr, also from Troop #424, achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, however due to job requirements he was unable to attend.

Councilwoman Crouse made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on May 22, 2017. Councilman Helmick asked for the minutes to be amended to reflect School Superintendent, Bill Sturgill's comment during the 5-22-17 public hearing. During that meeting Mr. Sturgill confirmed his comment (when asked by Councilman Helmick) that the school could currently pay for the turf project if needed. With no other corrections, Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.



Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date Council has been asked to consider the approval of the Galax City FY2018 Budget. A public hearing was conducted on May 22 and no changes were made since the hearing. At the July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, the budget will be appropriated. The proposed budget is as follows:

- General Fund Budget (including DSS) - \$17,803,219
- Utility Fund Budget - \$ 5,542,790
- Stormwater Fund - \$ 129,500

Proposed tax rates represent a change in the current real estate rates:

- Real Estate - \$0.80 per \$100
- Personal Property - \$2.25 per \$100
- Machinery & Tools - \$1.50 per \$100

Councilman Davis made the motion to approve the FY2018 Budget which included: The General Fund, Utility Fund, and Stormwater Fund. Councilman Helmick seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.

Councilman Garner made the motion to approve the FY2018 Budget tax rates as listed in the proposed budget.. Councilman Davis seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date for a public hearing for the following two applicants for Zoning Conditional Use Permits:

- Bryan & Victoria Lindberg, 223 South Main Street, Tax Parcel 55-300.
- Danny & Donna Higgins, and Robin & Amy Shaffer, 105 East Grayson Street, Tax Parcel 55-263.

City Manager Keith Barker informed Council the two conditional use permits were for two (2) apartments over each of these storefront addresses in the downtown area. The Planning Commission met on June 8<sup>th</sup> and recommended that City Council approve both conditional use permits as requested. Mr. Barker explained that Council may accept the recommendation of the Planning Commission, may reject their recommendation, or may take no action which would mean the Planning Commission recommendation would stand. Mr. Barker closed by saying since this was a conditional use permit, Council may also place additional requirements on the permit if they chose to do so. The minutes for the Planning Commission meeting and the zoning request applications were given to Council prior to the public hearing. Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comments. With no comments offered, Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed.



Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the two conditional use permits for 223 South Main Street and 105 East Grayson Street. Councilwoman Crouse seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, and Councilman Davis. Councilman Helmick abstained due to business conflicts.

Keith Barker informed Council of a proposed ordinance revision to the City Code, Chapter 153-36 Water/Sewer Rates. Mr. Barker further explained that City Council conducted the public hearing at the May 22 meeting for this ordinance revision. Council was asked to consider the approval of the ordinance with the implementation of the new rates on the September 1, 2017 billing. The rate increase was a requirement in order to pay the debt service with the upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Councilman Davis made the motion to approve the ordinance allowing the new rates. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.

Keith Barker gave Council an update regarding elections and voter turnout options for increased awareness. This matter was discussed at the last Council meeting. Mr. Barker spoke with Stacy Reavis, Registrar, who met with members of the Electoral Board to discuss the issue. Generally, they felt some efforts on voter awareness such as Nixel, links to Facebook pages, placing notices on the Community Channel 3, etc. would be an effective method to increase community awareness closer to the elections. Mr. Barker advised they would also work with the Gazette to consider publishing an actual voter ballot so citizens can see who the candidates were. Councilman Helmick asked who would be responsible for the notifications. Mr. Barker stated that it would be a combined effort with the Registrar, Electoral Board, and City Manager. There was also a brief discussion among Council regarding how the candidate forums held in the past were often helpful in informing citizens about the candidates. Those were originally sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, however there has not been a forum in the past couple of elections.

Mayor Mitchell informed Council that three candidates had applied for an open term on the Library Board which would run from July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2021. The candidates were Sarah Price, Mariah Nunn, and Irene Turner. Ms. Nunn and Ms. Turner's letters of interest were both submitted after the May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline, however they were included for Council's consideration. Councilman Helmick said that he felt since Ms. Price was the only candidate who submitted her letter of interest before the deadline, and she had helped with landscaping projects at the library as well as continually encouraged citizens to become involved in City activities, he felt like she would be the best candidate. Councilwoman Crouse noted that she felt that Ms. Price would make a great ambassador for the City. Councilman Helmick made the motion to appoint Sarah Price to the Library Board. Councilwoman Crouse seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.



Keith Barker informed Council that there were two open positions on the Industrial Development Authority. He said that one letter of interest had been received from Michael Larowe. The term would be from July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2021. Mr. Barker informed Council that a person to fill the remaining vacancy on the IDA would be sought. Councilman Helmick commented that he would be interested in serving on the IDA. Mr. Barker said that he would discuss the matter with the City Attorney first to see if it would be a conflict for a Council member to serve on both the IDA and City Council. Councilman Davis had positive comments to say about Mr. Larowe and made the motion to appoint him to the IDA. Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.

Katherine Asbury, the new BRCEDA Director was present to introduce herself to Council and spoke about activities that BRCEDA has been undertaking. Ms. Asbury also gave an update on Wildwood.

Judy Bolt, HR Director, spoke to Council about possible revisions to our handbook concerning VRS hybrid employees and leave. Under Virginia law, Ms. Bolt explained that we were mandated to provide hybrid employees with a short term disability plan (6 months) that covers a portion of their salary after they have been out of work for seven (7) days, which included weekends. In the past, accumulated sick leave served as a form of short term disability, however with the new plan we do not feel this leave policy would still be needed in its current format for hybrid employees. The recommendation from staff was to move hybrid employees to a Paid Time Off (PTO) leave system rather than earned leave and sick leave as currently offered. New hybrid employees currently earn 10 days of earned leave and 12 days of sick leave in a year, and can carry over a portion of that. The recommendation was that we would provide the earned leave per our current schedule plus 5 days in addition PTO that would cover an illness or accident that required them to move to short term disability. The employee would be able to carry over that portion of leave that could be earned in a year as a maximum carryover. Existing employees that are not hybrid employees would still fall under the current leave and sick leave policy but they would not be eligible for short term disability. Ms. Bolt noted if the change was approved, current hybrid employees would move to the new PTO plan effective July 1 and we would convert their current annual leave plus 40 hours of sick leave to the new PTO. If they had over 40 hours of sick leave, we would reimburse them for this time as we do other employees at \$10 for every 8 hours of leave. Earned leave would convert over on an hour for hour basis. After a brief discussion between Council and Ms. Bolt, Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the hybrid employee leave. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Davis, and Councilman Helmick.



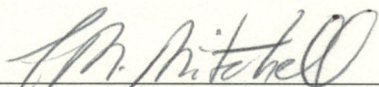
At 8:20 p.m. a motion was made by Councilwoman Crouse to enter into closed session under the following Codes of Virginia:

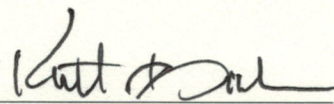
- Candidates for Employment - § 2.2-3711.A.1 of the *Code of Virginia* - Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body.
- Prospective Business or Industry - § 2.2-3711.A.5 of the *Code of Virginia* - Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community.

Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick – yea.

At 8:40 p.m. Council reconvened in open session. Mayor Mitchell certified that no items other than those allowed under the cited Virginia code section were discussed and no action was taken, with the following affirmation: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Davis – yea, and Councilman Helmick – yea.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:40 p.m.

  
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Mayor

  
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Clerk

