

Galax City Council
Minutes
November 12, 2018

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on November 12, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.

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, Councilman Greene, Councilman Davis, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilwoman White. Vice Mayor Plichta was absent.

Councilman Haynes prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Mitchell congratulated Paul Nichols, who retired on October 31st, after being employed with the Public Works Department for over 21 years. He was given a plaque and watch as a token of appreciation. Council thanked him for his service to the City.

Mayor Mitchell welcomed Boy Scout Troop 188 who was present to earn a merit badge.

Councilman Greene made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on October 8, 2018. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Davis, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilwoman White.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date scheduled for a public hearing which concerned a request from Clark and Josée Williams to rezone 204 Shaw Street from M-1 light manufacturing to B-2 General Business. He opened the floor for public comments. Daniel Riegel, Zoning Administrator spoke briefly. He explained that Mr. & Mrs. Williams planned to convert the space to a fitness training facility. Mr. Riegel said the Galax Planning Commission conducted their public hearing for the property and rezoning request on October 8th. He closed by saying the Planning Commission made the recommendation to rezone the property from M-1 to B-2. Mayor Mitchell asked if there were further comments. There were none. He declared the public hearing closed. Councilwoman Beth White made the motion to approve the zoning request. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Davis, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilwoman White.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date scheduled for a public hearing which concerned a proposed ordinance amendment for the Christmas gifts that had been provided to staff for years of service. Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comment.

City Manager, Keith Barker, spoke briefly to explain the City had historically provided a Christmas gift to employees based on years of service. He said gifts ranged from \$25 for 1 year of service to \$200 for 20 or more years of service and had been a long-standing practice for 30 or more years. Mr. Barker had spoken with the City's auditor & attorney and had determined this practice was considered a bonus and required an amendment to our City Code. If approved, Council would need to authorize an ordinance modification that would call out the gift and that it was provided during the holiday season between Thanksgiving and the end of the year. Mayor Mitchell asked if there were any public comments. There were none. Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed. Councilman Davis made the motion to approve the ordinance amendment for employee Christmas gifts. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Davis, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilwoman White.

Keith Barker gave an update on recent flooding events and preliminary engineering review study being conducted on the stormwater system. Mr. Barker said the field surveying had been completed on the area from Bartlett Street up to Academy Drive, and most of the area around Oldtown Street. He said there were still a few days of additional surveying that must occur but Lane Group were currently running drainage calculations. Mr. Barker said on November 2, he authorized Lane Group to proceed with camera work for areas of the stormwater system where pipes could not be identified or areas where it appeared pipe sizes changed. He said that work was being scheduled with DLB Contracting. A copy of the report would be presented at an upcoming meeting.

Keith Barker informed Council that the parcel at the end of Jack Guynn Drive (that AEP obtained an option to purchase) had been sold. Funds were received on November 1 and deposited in the IDA account. He said a future meeting with the IDA would determine how funds may be held or distributed back to the City.

Keith Barker spoke with Council regarding the possibility of holding an upcoming work session with a speaker/facilitator for the session. He said the request was for Council to consider holding the first session without a speaker and then inviting one in follow-up sessions as needed. Mr. Barker closed by saying if this was agreeable to Council, he would work to determine an agreeable date and location for Council to hold the session. The consensus was to approve the request as presented by Mr. Barker.

Mayor Mitchell informed Council with Chief Clark's retirement in September, Council was asked to consider appointing Chief Cooper to a position on the Galax Bottom Area Advisory Board. He said this was an indefinite appointment until the project was complete. The Chief's appointment would aid in having officers assist in applications, translation services, etc. Councilman Greene made the motion to appoint Chief Cooper to the board. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Davis, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilwoman White.

Keith Barker made a request of Council regarding the Business Challenge Grant. He asked if two (2) council members would consider participating in the Business Challenge Grant. One council member would judge business plans and the other would participate in the pitch night. The consensus was to appoint Mayor Mitchell for judging and for Councilman Haynes for participating in pitch night.

Keith Barker informed Council that he and Captain Cox had participated in a site visit with FEMA representatives on November 2 to assess damage during Hurricane Michael and our eligibility to receive federal assistance for cleanup and repairs. He said we were still working on assessment of damage, however FEMA reps indicated that we had met threshold requirements for damage and could submit reimbursements for repairs that were currently underway. He explained the most obvious repairs were those on Stockyard Road, the cleanup that occurred on E. Stuart Drive, repairs to the Fox Run Drive entrance from Prospect Avenue, and possible repairs to the Galax Elementary School playground area. He said this reimbursement was not guaranteed and if approved, it could be months before funds were actually sent back. Mr. Barker said as we progressed, he would keep Council informed. He continued by saying we were still waiting on Virginia and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to make determinations on eligibility for reimbursement for repairs and cleanup associated with the September 8 rain /flooding event and the Hurricane Florence event. Mr. Barker concluded by thanking the city staff and other for their efforts during these past months with the storms we experienced. Public Works, Police, Engineering, GGEMS, and Galax Fire Department all assisted in assessment, repairs, cleanup, traffic control, etc. during these events.

Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comments. The following citizens spoke regarding how the flooding issues had impacted the alleys in the city as well as their property:

- Fayma Nye
- Cheryl Littmann
- Mike Bermingham
- Jose Mazariegos

Mr. Barker explained the issues would be addressed in time due to the fact that Galax had been hit hard with flooding recently. Mayor Mitchell thanked the citizens who spoke.

With no further comments the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:20 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

