

Galax City Council  
Minutes  
February 11, 2019

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on February 11, 2019 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, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe. Councilman Haynes was absent.

Vice Mayor Plichta prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Mitchell administered the Oath of Office to Galax Police Officer Meagan Parks.

Mayor Mitchell welcomed Bill Davis and presented a plaque of appreciation for Mr. Davis serving as a Galax Councilman from January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2018.

Mayor Mitchell announced that Ches Helmick was to be presented a plaque of appreciation for serving as a Galax Councilman from July 1, 2016 – August 13, 2018, but Mr. Helmick was unavailable to attend the meeting.

Mayor Mitchell congratulated and presented a resolution to Lee Peoples for his achievement of being named on the VHSL All-State Football Team.

Mayor Mitchell congratulated Mike Brown, Chief Water Plant Operator, for receiving water fluoridation awards.

Mayor Mitchell announced William Bottomley of High Country Lights had requested to share an award that he had received from Channel 10 WSLs for his light show located in Felts Park.

Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on January 28, 2019. Councilman Greene seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

Keith Barker, City Manager, gave an update on damage from Hurricane Michael. Mr. Barker explained that staff met with FEMA and VDEM representatives on Feb. 1 concerning the emergency declaration for the Hurricane Michael event in October 2018. Capt. James Cox was the lead person on this, with supporting information being provided by Charlie Joyce from Public Works and Judy Taylor-Gallimore from Finance. The general scope of the meeting was good and the following was learned:



- We had 60 days from Feb. 1 to complete all of requests to FEMA. Not all work had to be completed (ex. paving on Stockyard Road), but we had to list all the areas we were seeking assistance with and have cost estimates for incomplete work.
- FEMA would provide up to 75% reimbursement on our costs with some restrictions (listed below). An additional 5% may also be available from VDEM through state funds, but that wasn't guaranteed.
- We could seek overtime rates, equipment costs, materials, etc., however we couldn't seek regular time salaries.
- I asked about how long it would take to be reimbursed. It had taken some localities up to 4 years to get the reimbursement, but our VDEM rep said a lot of changes had been put in place to make that move much faster.

Councilwoman Beth White reminded everyone about an upcoming Foster Care Informational Workshop that would be held on Feb. 17 at 6:00 PM at Christ Chapel Church on Bee Line Drive. Ms. White explained the intent of the workshop was to seek out additional foster parents to serve with the Galax DSS in providing foster care services to children in our area. Ms. White further explained that due to a lack of available homes, we were seeing more children removed from our community and placed in foster homes or group facilities in other regions of the state. She said while this took care of the immediate need of caring for these children, additional strain was placed on them, the family, and community by their removal from this area. It was noted that it was much more expensive to place a child out of the area rather than in a local home. Upcoming regulations from the state which concern placements also stresses local and familial placements rather than out of town placements or group homes. Ms. White hoped to have a good turnout for the workshop.

Keith Barker gave an update to Council regarding upcoming special elections. Mr. Barker said that he had met with Stacey Reavis, Registrar, concerning the special elections for the unexpired terms of Councilman Helmick and Councilman Davis. He explained because of the different dates that both resigned, there were 2 filing deadlines for the November election. The requirements were as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> filing deadline, which would be from Mr. Helmick's resignation, would be June 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. This was the seat Ms. White was appointed to. This was because November 2019 would be the 2<sup>nd</sup> November election after this vacancy occurred.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> filing deadline, which would be from Mr. Davis's resignation, would be August 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 PM. This was the seat Mr. Larowe was appointed to. This was because November 2019 would be the 1<sup>st</sup> November election after this vacancy occurred.
- Each City Council race would have a headline of "Member, City Council (vote for only one)".

Keith Barker informed Council of a budget amendment request. A copy of the February 4, 2019 minutes of the Galax IDA were given to Council. Mr. Barker explained at that meeting, the IDA approved the transfer of \$190,000 from the IDA account back to the City, which represented a portion of the funds from the sale of the parcel in the Jack Guynn Drive Industrial Park to Appalachian Power. The revenue would be shown in line item 10.3.3180.1032 IDA Contribution in the revenue portion of the General Fund. Mr. Barker asked Council to consider amending the expenditure portion of the budget by allocating:



- \$63,000 to 10.4.4530.5660 Comprehensive Service – DSS. This would complete the budget amendment needed for increased foster care costs.
- \$120,000 to line item 10.4.9102.6018 Capital Reserve.
- \$7,000 to 10.4.9900.1186 Mobile Unit at Shooting Range. This would allow completion of the work for the relocation of the former GES mobile classroom building to our firing range as a classroom for the police and fire departments.

Mr. Barker said as the total amendment was less than 1% of the City budget, a public hearing was not required for the consideration of the budget amendment. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the budget amendment. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

Keith Barker informed Council of an Industrial Development Authority vacancy. Mr. Barker explained with Councilman Larrowe’s appointment to City Council, he was no longer eligible to serve on the IDA. He said a citizen of Galax who resident in the City must be appointed. Mr. Barker reminded Council that they could direct staff to run an advertisement seeking interested citizens, they could approach individuals and seek letters of interest, or any other method Council wishes to seek persons interested in this seat. There was a consensus among Council to hold this item over to another meeting.

Keith Barker informed Council that Carter Bank had listed for sale parcels located on N. Main St. and Jefferson Street. He said the original asking price of all parcels was \$270,000 with the parcels on the corner of Main St. and Center St. (tax parcels 55-147,148,149) being listed for \$85,000 and the parcel on the corner of Jefferson St. and Center St. (tax parcel 55-151, 153, 153, 154, 155) being listed for \$185,000. Mr. Barker was contacted by the realtor about a price reduction, and made a lower offer on behalf of the City to purchase all parcels for \$100,000. He said Carter Bank had tentatively accepted that offer. A copy of the sales agreement and maps showing the areas to be purchased were shown to Council. The IDA voted to approve the purchase of the parcel with IDA funds pending approval of the purchase from City Council. Mr. Barker said if Council agreed with the purchase, the recommendation from our attorney was to list ownership of the parcels with the Galax IDA. Mr. Barker said if Council wished to complete the purchase, he asked Council to vote on the purchase of the property by the IDA and permit the IDA & City Manager to proceed with completing required paperwork to proceed with the purchase. Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion to approve the purchase of the Carter Bank properties by the IDA and authorize the City Manager to complete all the necessary paperwork regarding the transaction. Councilwoman White seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

Mayor Mitchell called for any public comments from visitors attending.

Cheryl Littmann spoke briefly regarding comments about Council.

Loretta Evans addressed Council regarding flooding issues on Swanson Street.

With no further comments the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:30 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk