

Galax City Council
Minutes
March 25, 2019

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on March 25, 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, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

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

Keith Barker, City Manager, made Council aware of revisions to recent meeting minutes. He noted that a paragraph regarding the budget amendment was unintentionally omitted from the February 25th minutes and had been corrected. On the March 11th minutes, in the paragraph regarding the Hampton Property, the motion & second was named by the same person, and was also corrected. Councilman Greene made the motion to approve the revised February 25th & March 11th minutes. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

Keith Barker informed Council that he had recently spoken to staff with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) which concerned the City's request for an analysis and study of Chestnut Creek through the Section 205 Study process. He explained the thought with the request was for the USACE to evaluate Chestnut Creek in regards to its capacity to carry the creek during heavy rainfall events, taking into consideration new upstream development that may have increased the overall flow. He said the preliminary observations from the USACE were that Chestnut Creek was well maintained and one of the projects that continued to perform as originally designed and constructed. Mr. Barker said he submitted an original request in 2017 but it did not move forward in the USACE budget process for that federal fiscal year. He explained that he submitted a revised request after the flooding events in September and October 2018 and our project had been elevated for additional consideration due to those events. He said staff from USACE had indicated that we should receive a notice by the end of March or early April if our project had been funded in the current federal fiscal year. The grant from the USACE would be for up to \$100,000 in study costs, with any amount over that split 50/50. The City's cost share could be with in-kind assistance. He said they had informed him that they did not feel the study would cost over the grant amount. Mr. Barker further explained that related to this study, he had also contracted with the Lane Group to do a Joint Permit Application with the USACE that would allow us to remove sand bars in Chestnut Creek. He said we currently were not permitted to enter the creek with equipment for such work. He said the application should be submitted within 60 days and hopefully a permit would be received soon after that. Mr. Barker said he had contacted the landfill authority about assistance with their excavator and work would be accomplished over a few months as equipment and manpower would permit.

Keith Barker gave an update regarding the Carter Bank Property that Council recently had approved to purchase. He said he had spoken with the City's attorney and we had received a clear title review on the Carter Bank property downtown. He said the expected date to close on that property would be during the week of March 25-29.

Keith Barker said he was pleased to announce that the governor had signed HB1840. He explained this bill would direct the State Corporation Commission to establish pilot programs by Dominion Energy Virginia and Appalachian Power with the purpose of promoting economic development in the rural areas of the Commonwealth. Mr. Barker said this would allow the utility to complete the construction phase of electric transmission infrastructure for a megasite prior to the public announcement of a prospective occupant of the megasite and would also authorize a utility company to recover the costs of the transmission facility through a rate adjustment clause. This would also allow the construction of the proposed 138Kv line to Wildwood, at a cost of \$16,000,000, prior to a company announcing their interest in the site. He said currently the lines would not be constructed until a company announced their intent to locate at Wildwood or the localities would have to pay for the construction of the line. Mayor Mitchell said this was a great cost savings to the localities invested in Wildwood and would allow this site to be considered a top tier site for the state.

Chief Cooper gave an overview of the Galax Police Department and updated Council on initiatives they were undertaking. The department's goals included:

- Community Policing
- Problem Solving – Stratified Policing Model
- Intelligence Led Policing
- Safety & Service
- Technology & Innovation

Chief Cooper said he was honored to be the Chief of Police and enthusiastic about the future of the Galax Police Department.

Chris Pollins, Chestnut Creek School of the Arts Director, addressed Council with an in depth update on current activities of CCSA. Ms. Pollins explained that the CCSA that had been created in the heart of downtown Galax was a vital hub of activity which included fully equipped studios in Wood, Pottery, Metal, Glass, Fibers, Music, Painting, Drawing, Printmaking and more. She said year-round programming, events and exhibits for all ages and skill levels were available. Ms. Pollins said by showcasing our talent and preserving our heritage through classes and maximizing the use of our studios, tools and equipment, CCSA had become just as much about community development as economic development. In one year's time, visitation for the School, Pottery & Wood totaled 18,784. Direct payment to artists totaled \$47,851.29, and an estimate of CCSA student spending while in town totaled \$10,956.81. Ms. Pollins closed by saying that CCSA had come a long way and with everyone's help they could even go further. She thanked Council for their support.

Keith Barker informed Council of a request for a public hearing for Galax Grayson EMS. Chief Jason Busick & Capt. Steve Ayers of GGEMS were present to answer any questions. Mr. Barker explained GGEMS had discussed refinancing of their facility in order to free up capital to go towards an ambulance lease or purchase. He said while Galax was listed as the owner of the parcel, GGEMS had paid the City for the facility and pays operating and maintenance costs. In order to secure the loan, the City must hold the required public hearing to consider the granting of a Deed of Trust to the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission or their designee. Chief Jason Busick had previously reported that GGEMS had the repayment of the loan in their budget and would be responsible for payments to MRPDC. Mr. Barker asked that City Council set April 8 as the date for a public hearing. Councilman Greene made the motion to approve the GGEMS public hearing request. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the

following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larowe.

Keith Barker made Council aware of another item with GGEMS. He explained that due to excessive repair costs in the last two fiscal years, the GGEMS Board had been exploring options on how to purchase or lease ambulances in order to update their fleet. He said most of their vehicles were well in excess of 100,000 miles, and they were seeing repair costs that would approach \$125,000 this year. Mr. Barker said the City had some discussions with a company (PennCare) that specialized in demonstration model ambulances that they sell after they have been used for shows or demonstrations to agencies. The ambulances were typically 1 to 2 years old, had less than 20,000 miles, and carried extensive warranties for service and maintenance. Mr. Barker said PennCare was also listed on the national procurement website for HGACBuy, of which the City was a member. He explained the GGEMS Board met earlier in the day and voted to proceed with the lease/purchase of two 4-wheel drive ambulances and one 2-wheel drive ambulance at the cost of \$129,088 per year pending approval from Galax City Council. Since the City was shown as owners of the vehicles, it did require action by Galax City Council to also approve the loan, however GGEMS would provide the payments as a pass-through loan. He said part of the lease/purchase would also allow us to provide new cardiac monitors in the vehicles, as well as newly mandated cot retention systems that were grandfathered in our older vehicles. Part of those costs were grant covered or had been discounted pending action by City Council. Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the lease/purchase option and to authorize the City Manager to execute documents as required. Councilman Larowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larowe.

Keith Barker reminded Council that we would have our first budget work session on April 1 at 6:00 PM. On a related matter, Mr. Barker asked Council to authorize Mayor Mitchell and Councilman Haynes as a committee to speak with the schools concerning their budget. He said Mayor Mitchell and Councilman Haynes were meeting March 27 with the schools to discuss the school property on Kipling Lane and the schools had asked to discuss the budget at that time also. Council did not set a budget committee at the January meeting so he said members would need to be appointed in order to have that meeting. Councilwoman White made the motion to appoint Mayor Mitchell & Councilman Haynes to a budget committee. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larowe.

Mayor Mitchell announced that the interviews for the open Galax School Board seats were set for April 8. There was a consensus among Council to meet at 6:00 p.m. before the regular meeting.

With no further public comments, Mayor Mitchell accepted a motion made by Councilman Larowe at 8:45 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Codes of Virginia:

Prospective Business or Expansion of an existing 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 Ritchie seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

At 9:15 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, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:15 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk