

Galax City Council

Minutes

January 27, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on January 27, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 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 Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larrowe. Vice Mayor Plichta was absent and Councilwoman White arrived at 7:00 p.m.

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

Councilman Greene made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 13, 2020. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larrowe.

Keith Barker informed Council of the creation of a draft Economic Incentive Policy for the City of Galax. He explained the creation of this document was one of the deliverables based on the Vision 2020 Plan that City Council adopted in December 2019. He explained state and local incentive programs were identified; but these could change yearly as new programs were developed or existing programs were amended at the state level. Mr. Barker said local incentives were based on our current Enterprise Zone incentives, along with job creation and investment incentives for larger projects that would return a positive investment for the City in 36 months. Mr. Barker said the document should be reviewed yearly to verify appropriate programs were included and to consider new opportunities available in Galax. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the Economic Incentive Policy. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larrowe.

Mr. Josh Lewis, Executive Director of Virginia's Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA), gave a presentation and update on VIAA and their efforts on behalf of our region. VIAA serves as the regional economic development agency that works with our state partners. VIAA serves Galax, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Wythe, and Bland. VIAA recently expanded to add a staff person with specific duties in business retention and expansion opportunities.

Ms. Chris Pollins, Chestnut Creek School of the Arts Executive Director, was present and gave an overview of CCSA and happenings in the past year.

Keith Barker informed Council of an upcoming event in Roanoke. He said that Tammy Smith, Galax DSS Director, made him aware of the Save Jane Campaign. It was created by the Dallas, Texas Child Advocacy Center in 2019 which focused on the goal of developing a campaign with emotional impact that would raise awareness, communicate the role of their agency and demonstrate not only the magnitude of their work but to bring awareness to the significant number of children who are abused every year. He explained that Save Jane was a campaign that hoped to go National. The local Child Advocacy Center (CAC) in Christiansburg realized the enormous impact of the campaign and how powerful it was, the CAC staff and MDT members immediately realized it was a campaign that was needed in our community in a way that could bring together each of the 13 jurisdictions served by the Child Advocacy Center. Mr. Barker said the event would take place on April 2nd from 8am through 10pm at Elmwood Park in Roanoke. There were 14,246

children that reported abused during the 2018/2019 year in the 13 jurisdictions. He said during the event volunteers would read each and every name of the children that were reported. "Jane" and "John" would be used in place of the children's real names. The names would be read non-stop until all 14,246 had been read. He said it was estimated to take about 14 hours to read every name. Local Mayors, members of our City Council, City Managers, Police Chief etc. were asked to consider volunteering. Mr. Barker said there were several attending from Galax.

Lauren Praither from Northway Apartments was present concerning upgrades to the facility that they would like to perform. Ms. Praither explained as part of the process and approval from possible funding agencies, they were asking that Council consider adoption of a resolution which would establish a revitalization district as defined in the Code of Virginia 36-55.30:2. A. The district would give property owners access to low interest loans from the Virginia Housing Development Authority for the rehabilitation of the facilities and utilities. Ms. Praither explained they were looking to perform facility upgrades since the last major work performed was approximately 20 years ago. It was noted that establishing the revitalization district under the code section would not obligate the city for any funds or impact the property from a local tax assessment standpoint. Keith Barker informed Council in 2008, the City authorized a Revitalization Zone for a previous project at 200 S. Main Street and to his knowledge there were no issues with the designation. Councilman Larowe made the motion to approve the resolution designating the property at 128 Wilson Ave. Northway Apartments, as a revitalization zone per VA Code 36-55.30:2.A. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larowe.

Keith Barker informed Council of a request from the Probation and Parole District #16 Sub-office. He explained this office was currently located above Galax DSS, and they were considering a relocation to 974 E. Stuart Drive later this year. Mr. Barker said while the probation office occupied the 3rd floor of 105 E. Center St, the City did not have a formal lease arrangement and did not collect rent. He reminded Council they do have the authority to request that the Department of Corrections hold a public hearing regarding the proposed lease. Councilman Greene made the motion to approve the request for relocation without a public hearing. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larowe.

Keith Barker gave an update on the Labor Program from statistics given by Zeke Morton, our Labor Program Coordinator. Mr. Barker explained that this program was used to assist citizens in completing court ordered community service hours or those enrolled in the Senior Citizens Service Employment Program (SCSEP). He said individuals report to the coordinator and were assigned various tasks through janitorial services, construction work with our staff, work at the animal shelter, etc. Mr. Barker said the total hours worked were 6,760 in 2019 with an hourly value of \$67,600 based on \$10 per hour. He said if these were full time positions, the total cost would be approximately \$98,000+ with required benefits. Mayor Mitchell congratulated Zeke Morton for the success of the program.

Councilwoman White joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Keith Barker addressed Council regarding some upcoming FY2021 budget items. He wanted to make them aware of some legislation and other items that would impact our budget in FY2021. These included:

- Legislation for an increase in minimum wage. This would impact mainly the Recreation Center and some other part-time positions; however, some legislation was targeting \$15 per hour by 2025 which would then affect a number of departments. A preliminary estimate shows that moving staff to \$10 per hour would increase costs by \$60k to \$70k in FY2021 and each \$1 increase thereafter would be an additional \$50k+ in funding.
- Legislation for the absentee voter period being extended to 45 days. If we were unable to handle early/absentee voting in the Registrar's office, this legislation would require two additional voter staff, representing each political party, to be in the voting location for 45 days prior to each election. The costs were estimated at \$7,500 per election or primary.
- Monta Vista Cemetery and Mausoleum. As discussed in prior meetings, we would need to include funding for some mausoleum repairs and the additional staff person.
- Governor budgeted increase in DSS salaries, 15% to 20% in May plus 3% in July. Our portion of these pay raises would be approximately \$18,000 per year.
- CSA Expenditures. This would obviously be an ongoing concern; however we were hoping that this may slow down some with family re-unification and adoptions.
- Comprehensive Plan Update in FY2021, estimated at \$15,000 by MRPDC.
- Staffing changes per the Council planning document.
- We have been seeing additional requests from outside agencies and groups that would need consideration.


Keith Barker said he was pleased to announce that Hobby Lobby and Big Lots would be locating in the Twin County Plaza, which Regency Properties own. He explained that efforts to assist the project from the City were called out per our Enterprise Zone, which included waived permit fees, no cost utility connections, and expansion of our Enterprise Zone to allow the owners to apply for any state offered assistance.

Council Comments

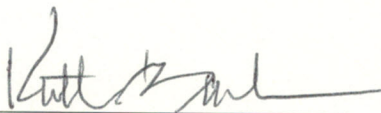
Councilwoman White spoke on the upcoming 2020 Census. She explained that she had been in a Census Training Workshop earlier in the evening and went over reasons why it was so important for every person to be counted for the census.

With no further public comments Mayor Mitchell declared the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:20 p.m.



 Mayor



 Clerk

