

Galax City Council
Minutes
February 10, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on February 10, 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, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larrowe. Councilwoman White was absent.

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

In special action, Mayor Mitchell welcomed GPD Officer Chris Hines along with his retiring Police Canine, Ajo. Chief Cooper, Captain Cox, and other officers were in attendance. Mayor Mitchell read a proclamation of appreciation for the service that Ajo gave to the community until health issues forces his retirement from service. Ajo will remain active at community events and visiting schools with his handler and owner, Officer Hines.

Mayor Mitchell read aloud a proclamation honoring GHS student athlete, Lee Peoples for being named the 2019 VHSL Class I Defensive Player of the Year. Also honored with a proclamation were Lee Peoples, Brendan Bryson, Denver Brown, and Zach Johnson for being named to the 2019 VHSL Class I All-State Football Team. In their absence, Mayor Mitchell noted that we had been unable to coordinate the invitation with the GHS players to attend a meeting.

Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 27, 2020. Councilman Greene 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, and Councilman Larrowe.

Keith Barker gave an update on the TG Vaughan Plant Project, update from Attorney, and an upcoming meeting. Mr. Barker informed Council of the upcoming group meeting concerning the TG Vaughan Project at the Vaughan Furniture Corporate Offices on Glendale Road. Councilman Larrowe spoke briefly due to his role in the project. The meeting will be on February 12 at 1:00 and noted that Leah Fremouw from Virginia Community Capital would be in attendance. He said the intent of the meeting would be to develop the program for the upcoming larger meeting with community invitees. Mr. Barker reminded Council of the memo from our attorney which was given to them regarding possible ownership of the facility as the project progresses. He said the overview was that any number of entities could be created to handle the ownership, but to avoid conflicts with various grants and tax credits the City should not be an owner but should instead consider being a facilitator/contributor for the project.

Keith Barker provided a brief but thorough update and overview of the Bottom Area Project - Eastview Phase, so that Council would be aware of the goals of the project and where we stood to date. He said the project was essentially a DHCD Community Development Block Grant, funded with:

- \$1,400,000 DHCD funds
- \$ 680,000 VDOT funds
- \$ 145,000 MRPDC Utility Grant Funds
- Local - Streets, Stormwater, and Utility Budgets

Deliverables on the project included:

- New Construction or renovation of 15 houses (8 under contract or complete)
- Façade work on 11 businesses (5 under contract or complete)
- New stormwater, utility, and road work on Meadow, Eastview, and Givens Streets

Mr. Barker explained while we were progressing on the project, we were currently waiting on the MY2 Agreement with DHCD for the second half of the funding on the housing and commercial projects. He said until that was in place, we could not proceed on the next houses or façade renovations.

Mr. Barker continued to explain that an early closure on Meadow St. was done to relocate a water line, but the bulk of that work was on a weekend and Sunday in order to maintain proper water pressure on the east side of the City. The most recent visible work was the street closure on Meadow St, which ended up lasting over 30 days. The original plan was for the closure to occur for 2 weeks, however issues with substandard soil (all removed) and water infiltration caused the need for the additional delay in opening the street. He said the street was now open and work was occurring on E. View, between Meadow and Givens. He explained we were waiting on an AEP underground line to be relocated within the next 2 weeks so the contractor could safely proceed. He said the final closure would be on Givens St. where we were installing sewer and stormwater lines. He said there would be other short closures for paving when that was ready to occur.

In regards to housing, Mr. Barker said we were making progress; however, we were notified of a need to provide asbestos clearance testing before demolitions could proceed. He said that work had caused a series of delays due to notification requirements to the state and a lack of experience with this issue by our contractors and staff. He said this requirement was also new to DHCD as they had not run into this before on housing projects.

Under the building code, houses were not required to provide that specific testing, however the regulatory department for Virginia OSHA interprets the requirement differently. He said we were complying with the request; however, we are also researching the validity of the application concerning these regulations. Mr. Barker closed by saying on the commercial façade program, we had completed work on 5 businesses and were waiting on approval of the DHCD contract before proceeding further.

Keith Barker informed Council that he met with USDA representatives earlier in the day to complete additional paperwork on the loan/grant for fire department radio equipment. He explained that even though we adopted resolutions for the loan/grant application, the resolution presented to Council must be adopted to complete the loan application. Mr. Barker said the grant was for \$50,000 and the loan was for \$42,000. He further explained in discussions with David Hankley, Galax Fire Chief, the Fire Department would make the loan payments but could pay the loan off early with other grant funds if necessary. Councilman Larowe made the motion to approve the resolution for the USDA loan application. Vice Mayor Plichta 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, and Councilman Larowe.

Mayor Mitchell welcomed Ms. Tammy Smith, Director Galax DSS, who was in attendance to discuss a budget amendment request to the CSA line item of the budget. Ms. Smith also gave statistics on the DSS caseload increase over the last few years. Keith Barker explained with an increase in foster care caseload (62 at this time), use of FY2020 funds for FY2019 invoices, and the state not pushing the Family First Initiative into operations this fiscal year as planned, the DSS office has expended the current budgeted funds. Ms. Smith requested that Council consider amending their budget by \$150,000 in order to cover operational costs for the next few months.

She noted a final budget amendment for FY2020 would be brought forward prior to the end of the fiscal year. Funds would be moved from line item 10.4.9102.6018 Capital Reserves to line item 10.4.4530.5660 Comprehensive Services DSS. Mr. Barker closed by saying that the line item was part of the Galax Elementary School construction project where funds were being saved for those debt service payments and the goal would be to try and recover those funds through other budget savings prior to the end of the fiscal year. The amendment was less than 1% of the overall budget so a public hearing was not required. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the budget amendment. 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, and Councilman Larowe.

Keith Barker informed Council of his recent trip to Richmond for the VML Legislative Day on February 6. He said Councilman Greene, Chief Cooper, and representatives from the counties of Grayson, Smyth, Wythe and Bland also attended. He said they met with our state representatives as well as other state officials while there. Mr. Barker said efforts were made to express concerns or support for various legislative items presently under consideration. Councilman Greene spoke briefly regarding the event.

Mayor Mitchell announced that we had been notified by Ms. Susan Tilly, Galax School Superintendent, that the appointment of Mr. Larry Spangler to the School Board was expiring on June 30. He said in keeping with past appointments, with Council’s agreement we would run advertisements for the open seat with an interview set for April. Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to authorize advertisements for the open school board seat. Councilman Greene 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, and Councilman Larowe.

Keith Barker informed Council of the most recent VDOT update regarding the City’s various projects. He said he was pleased to show that our projects were progressing per VDOT requirements and we were in “the green” per the VDOT dashboard system. Mr. Barker thanked staff in the Engineering and Public Works Departments for their efforts on our projects.

Keith Barker said the City was pleased to announce that Good Neighbors had opened their facility at 101 Jack Guynn Drive as of January 31. He met with the onsite managers on January 31 and toured the facility. He said they intended to hire 10 full time employees with part time staff as needed. Also, he said they would be providing services to developmentally challenged individuals on a daily basis, similar to an adult care facility.

Keith Barker offered to answer any questions from Council regarding the City Manager report which was given to Council members prior to the meeting. The report listed all projects which he was involved with and also included updates.

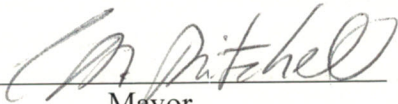
With no public comments, Mayor Mitchell accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor Plichta at 7:00 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia:

- **Personnel Matter – § 2.2-3711 A.1 of the Code of Virginia** - Candidates for employment; the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, discipline, salaries, compensation, or resignation of employees.
- **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.

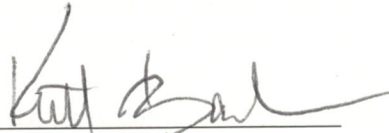
Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Greene, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, and Councilman Larrowe.

At 7:44 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, and Councilman Larrowe.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:45 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk