

Galax City Council

Minutes

March 23, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on March 23, 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 Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White and Councilman Larrowe. Councilman Greene was absent. Vice-Mayor Plichta joined the meeting via conference call at 6:10 p.m.

Councilwoman White prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 9, 2020. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilwoman White.

Mayor Mitchell told Council that they would take the agenda out of order and address the Covid-19 items first.

City Council discussed the Adoption of Resolution concerning an electronic meeting. City Manager Keith Barker explained that the adoption of the resolution would allow a council member to call into a meeting in cases if illness of other reasons that they could not attend. After discussion Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the resolution as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Ritchie and was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilwoman White.

City Manager Keith Barker asked if Council would now allow Vice-Mayor Plichta to call in to the meeting as she had a cold as was not able to attend in person. There were no objections to her calling in. Vice-Mayor Plichta then joined the meeting by conference call.

Mr. Barker made Council aware of the information from our attorney concerning how Council may meet under the emergency order from the Governor.

Mr. Barker then presented an emergency ordinance from our attorney that provides for the City continuity of government. The ordinance provided means of electronic meeting and for Council to proceed without regard to time-consuming procedures and formalities prescribed by laws (except mandatory constitutional requirements) pertaining to the performance of public work.

The emergency ordinance would provide the following:

- Ratifies the City Manager's earlier declaration of emergency from 3/18/20.
- Allows the City Manager to close facilities that typically provide day to day services.
- Allows the City Manager to alter schedules (including employees), arrange for alternatives to paying bills, engaging contractors, etc. This would be more applicable

to creating alternate work schedules for non-key staff positions, or rotating staff for separation during the event.

- Allows the postponement of up to 6 months for certain required meetings and would consider items you have not acted on “continued”.
- Would allow City Council, and other City function boards, to meet electronically without a quorum provided there is a way for the public to view and/or listen to the meeting. Certain additional efforts would need to be taken for public comment items, i.e. no action until written comments are read into the record, provide time between meetings for additional public comments, etc.
- Permits Council to hold meetings without the public - provided there are alternative arrangements made for electronic, audio, telephonic, or video broadcast.
- Permits that where public comments are required that they be received electronically by various methods and made part of the record.
- The ordinance is in effect until repealed by Council or for no more than 6 months.

Mr. Barker explained that as an emergency ordinance, there was not a requirement for a public hearing. After discussion, Councilman Larowe made the motion to approve the emergency ordinance as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Haynes and was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Mitchell, Vice-Mayor Plichta, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larowe, and Councilwoman White.

Mr. Barker presented Council with a Resolution, Waiving of Certain Penalties. The resolution that would permit the waiving penalty or interest of certain taxes (meals, lodging, admissions) during the pandemic if the payment is late. It does not excuse the payment, but simply removes late fees and interest for late filings. The resolution would permit payment up until June 15, 2020 without penalty, but was only for taxes incurred during March and April 2020. After discussion and expressing concern for local businesses at this time, Councilwoman White made the motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Plichta and was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Mitchell, Vice-Mayor Plichta, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larowe, and Councilwoman White.

City Council agreed to hold discussion of the Vision 2020 documents for future meetings. After additional discussion, Councilwoman White agreed to write a release for the City regarding our planning and efforts concerning the Covid-19 issues. Once completed, it will be released and posted to the City websites.

Mayor Mitchell accepted a motion made by Councilwoman White at 6:52 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Codes 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.

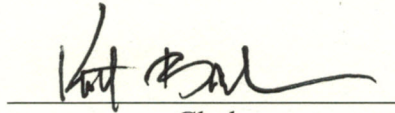
Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Mitchell, Vice-Mayor Plichta, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilwoman White.

At 7:29 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 Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilwoman White.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:30 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk