

Galax City Council

Minutes

April 13, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session by conference call on April 13, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

At 5:30 p.m. Mayor Mitchell called the meeting to order.

Mayor Mitchell accepted a motion made by Councilman Haynes at 5:30 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia:

Personnel Matter – School Board Appointments § 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.

Vice Mayor Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken votes of “yea”: Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilman Haynes – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman White – “yea”.

At 5:55 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 spoken affirmations: Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilman Haynes – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman White – “yea”.

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

Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 23, 2020. Councilwoman White seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilman Haynes – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman White – “yea”.

Keith Barker explained the City’s recently adopted emergency ordinance. He said under this ordinance Council would meet electronically during the current Governors Executive Order 53 and 55 regarding the Covid-19 issues. He said the main issues affecting City Council meetings were the prohibition of group meetings of more than 10 individuals, the safe social distancing, and the stay at home order. In order to meet the requirements of the ordinance, he explained the actions that were taken. He said Council meetings would be conducted electronically and the audio would be streamed over Facebook live. Public hearing information would be included on our website and in the Gazette as required by the Code of Virginia. Mr. Barker gave the specific requirements for making public comments and how they may be submitted.

Mayor Mitchell welcomed Ms. Susan Tilley, Galax School Superintendent, to the conference call meeting. Ms. Tilley gave an overview of the FY2021 Galax City School Budget and noted the unique circumstances regarding her presentation to Council. She explained the FY2020

budget had previously been presented to the School Board in March and was set to be approved on April 14th. Due to scheduling issues, this date was after the presentation to Council for approval. She noted that the FY2020 School Budget was created entirely before the Covid-19 outbreak which would mean there would be necessary revisions mandated by the State to the budget later in the week. Ms. Tilley informed Council that some priorities had emerged after meetings with staff which included a 2% raise for all employees, new positions at GES which included a new GES assistant principal, a new custodian, a fourth Pre-K class due to additional funding, and enhanced resources for students. Ms. Tilley said the FY2020 budget maintains level funding from the City. She thanked Council for the opportunity to work for the schools. Councilman Greene asked about what the starting salary was for teachers and was there an increase for substitute teachers. Ms. Tilley replied that currently the starting salary for a teacher is \$39,974 but that it would be over \$40,000 with the new budget. and she said there would be no increases included for substitutes since our rates were competitive. Councilwoman White thanked the schools for doing a great job during Covid-19 and the way they've made adjustments and handled a bad situation. Councilman Larrowe questioned the substantial decreases in summer school and the increases in "at risk" students. Ms. Tilley explained the large drops were due to change in calendar and no intercession weeks. She said they would be having summer programs and funds to support it later on. Ms. Tilley also discussed adding an additional Pre-K class. Mayor Mitchell asked the status of the current graduating class. Ms. Tilley replied that all 89 seniors would graduate on time and there would be a tradition graduation ceremony later on. Councilwoman Ritchie asked about scholarships. Ms. Tilley replied that a web page would be used to advertise and apply for a scholarship. She also noted that staff had been calling students individually and the Twin County Community Foundation Scholarship Program had been working to review applications. Ms. Tilley said that all students would be notified of any awarded scholarships. Councilman Greene made the motion to approve the public hearing advertisement for the Galax City School Budget for FY2021. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Councilman Greene – "yea", Councilman Haynes – "yea", Councilman Larrowe – "yea", Mayor Mitchell – "yea", Vice Mayor Plichta – "yea", Councilwoman Ritchie – "yea", and Councilwoman White – "yea".

Keith Barker informed Council of a proposed procurement policy amendment. He said the amendment was regarding when bids were required. He said the Code of Virginia required bidding for equipment after the price of an item exceeded \$100,000. Mr. Barker said our current policy required us to accept bids if the pricing exceeded \$50,000 and we currently solicit 4 written quotes for equipment and services that range from \$30,001 - \$50,000. The proposed amendment would allow the City to accept written quotes for equipment and services ranging from \$30,001 to \$100,000. Mr. Barker said he had spoken to our attorney and he had agreed that the proposed change was acceptable. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to accept the procurement policy amendment. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Councilman Greene – "yea", Councilman Haynes – "yea", Councilman Larrowe – "yea", Mayor Mitchell – "yea", Vice Mayor Plichta – "yea", Councilwoman Ritchie – "yea", and Councilwoman White – "yea".

City Manager Report

Keith Barker gave a brief update on the projects which he oversees.

Council Comments

Mayor Mitchell spoke briefly on Covid-19.

Councilman Greene discussed the May elections and the CARE act.

Councilman Larrowe spoke on a budget session and the impact on local revenues such as restaurants. He also discussed accessing funds to help such as IDLE program & PPP payroll.

Councilman Haynes spoke regarding efforts to anticipate the deficit and how to assist businesses such as restaurants in our area.

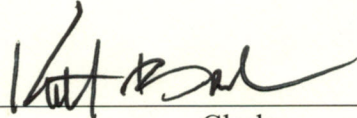
Councilwoman Ritchie discussed sales & lodging tax and also cabin rentals to out of state guests.

With no further discussion, Councilman Greene made the motion for the meeting to adjourn. Vice Mayor Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilman Haynes – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman White – “yea”.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:05 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk