

Galax City Council

Minutes

June 15, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on June 15, 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, Vice Mayor Plichta, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe. Councilman Greene joined the meeting by phone.

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

Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 26, 2020. 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 Larrowe.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date advertised for the public hearing and to receive public comments on the 2019-2020 reassessment. Mayor Mitchell and City Manager, Keith Barker informed Council there were no comments received by phone call, email, or letter. Mayor Mitchell announced the floor was open for public comments. There were none. Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date set to consider the FY2021 Galax City Budget. He read aloud the proposed tax rates which included:

	<u>Current Rate</u>	<u>Proposed Rate</u>
Real Estate	\$0.845	\$0.92
Personal Property	\$2.25	\$2.25 (no change)
M & T	\$1.50	\$1.60

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the adoption of the FY2021 Galax City Budget. 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, Councilwoman White, and Councilman Larrowe.

Keith Barker informed Council we had been reviewing the Cares Act funding we received and how we could apply funding to various needs within the City. He explained that we received the Cares Act funds (\$553,751) on June 1 and were continuing to move current expenditures to this funding. These expenditures included: PPE, payroll for employees quarantined or sick with Covid, unemployment due to facility closures, equipment allowing remote work or that provides separation of staff and customers, additional personnel costs for cleaning, etc. He explained a portion of the funds could be used in the upcoming fiscal year as we continue to experience employees that would qualify for the Covid leave, as we designate a portion of working hours of certain positions for Covid related issues, and for needed equipment and PPE. Mr. Barker further

explained at Council's direction, we had also looked at possible spending that could be put into the community to assist small local businesses, assist residents with food needs, and to assist housing needs. There were three possible programs for allocation of funding from the Cares Act which included:

- Galax Small Business Assistance Program, \$150,000. A program that would provide \$2000 to a qualifying small business that was impacted by Covid and was directly impacted by the Governors Executive Order 53. There were specific requirements the applicant would have to meet. Funds would be awarded on a first come first serve basis until all funds are depleted with deadline of August 31, 2020.
- Food Assistance Program, \$43,200 – God's Storehouse had suspended their current meal program due to Covid restrictions and had instead been purchasing meals 2x a week from local restaurants at \$600 per event (100 meals), \$1200 per week. The City's proposal was to provide an amount equivalent to \$1200 per week from July through December to allow them to purchase additional meals from local Galax restaurants. This would provide an income stream for local restaurants while feeding Galax citizens. The total amount proposed for local restaurant purchases is \$31,200. In addition, God's Storehouse also does a bulk grocery program where they buy \$1000 in food per month from Feeding SWVA and then re-box into food boxes for approximately 100 families. Our proposal would be to provide \$2000 per month in funding to allow God's Storehouse to provide additional food purchases for families. The additional funding would allow them to up their bulk purchases and food boxes for families during this difficult time. The amount proposed for bulk food purchases would be \$12,000.
- Housing Assistance Program, \$25,000 – Proposed funding for Rooftop, a local resource for families that have been being impacted due to Covid that would be unable to meet rental obligations, mortgage payments, or electrical bill payments. The funds would allow them to assist approximately 50 households with late rent, late mortgage payments, or electrical bills. Assistance would be income based. All households would be Galax residents.

Keith Barker summarized by saying the three programs that were proposed would require City Council to commit up to \$218,200 of the CARES Act funding that had been awarded to the City. He said the City was projecting that this would be feasible with current/projected expenditures in FY2020 and projected expenditures in FY2021. He said that funds must be spent by December 30, 2020. Councilman Larrowe made the suggestion to omit the requirement of disqualifying the business for the Small Business Assistance Program if the business was eligible for unemployment payments, PPP, or EIDL funds. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the proposed programs funded by the CARES Act to help the small businesses and citizens in the City of Galax, with the revision regarding the omission of the requirement regarding unemployment, PPP, or EIDL funds. Councilman Haynes 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. Councilwoman White abstained due to a conflict of interest.

Mayor Mitchell informed Council that a letter of interest had been received after an advertisement had been published for a seat on the Recreation Advisory Board. Mayor Mitchell said the letter was from Billy Whitaker seeking the appointment which had a term of 2 years. After a brief discussion, Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to appoint Billy Whitaker to the board. 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.

Under new business, Keith Barker announced that some members of Council had requested a closed session to interview candidates for Mayor and Vice-Mayor. Mr. Barker said if that was the desire of Council, we could set a closed session prior to the next meeting on July 13. The consensus was to meet at 4:30 p.m. prior the 6:00 p.m. meeting on July 13.

Keith Barker informed Council that the City had two Smart Scale applications that are were in the pre-application stage with VDOT. He said one for the East Stuart Drive Sidewalk Project - Phase I, and one for a Signal Modification at the Food City Intersection. Mr. Barker explained the E. Stuart Drive Sidewalk Project Phase I would be approximately 5,000 feet of new sidewalk along US 58 improving major intersections with signalized legs for pedestrian controls. The estimated cost would be \$1.56M for the project. The second project would modify the signal at the intersection of East Stuart Drive and the Food City Shopping Center to signalize turn movement at the north side of the intersection and provide a lead green light to the entrance that serves County Line and the other businesses along E. Stuart Drive. He said the estimate we had currently was approximately \$300,000 for this project. The Smart Scale program required a public hearing and adoption of a resolution as part of the submittal process. Councilman Greene made the motion to set July 13 as the date for the public hearing on the 2020 Smart Scale Applications. Councilwoman White 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 of a draft Communication Plan that Ms. Emily Brown, Tourism Director, had been working on. He said the document addressed various forms of ongoing communications with the public, as well as how staff would also relay information to the public. Mr. Barker explained as part of the plan, Ms. Brown had also developed a Galax City Council Facebook Page (Facebook @galaxcitycouncil) that we would use for future announcements to the public, permitting the Tourism Facebook page to return to more of a tourism focus. This project was one of the deliverables with the Vision 2020 document adopted by City Council in December 2019. Ms. Brown had also been working on ideas and input from City departments on updating the City's website. At a later date, Mr. Barker said vendors would be solicited to assist in updating the webpage. Council was asked to review the draft plan for comments at the next meeting on July 13.

Mayor Mitchell made Council aware of a need for Council appointments to various boards. He explained with Vice-Mayor Plichta coming off Council, there would be several boards that she had served on that would need to be filled. He said that Councilman Haynes had also asked that he be relieved of a couple of the boards he served on due to conflicts with work and time. The boards for discussions included:

- Twin County E-911, Councilman Warr had expressed an interest in being appointed to this board.
- Workforce Investment Board, Councilman Larrowe expressed an interest in being appointed to this board.
- Wired Road Authority, Councilman Warr was interested in this appointment.
- Rec Advisory Board, Councilwoman Ritchie expressed interest in this appointment.
- Mount Rogers Community Services Board, Ms. Susie Garner has verbally expressed an interest in being appointed to this board.

Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion to appoint those who had expressed an interest in the boards with open seats. Councilwoman White 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.

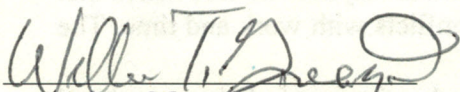
City Manager Report – Keith Barker gave an overview of the status of various projects, regional boards, and initiatives that is currently involved with.

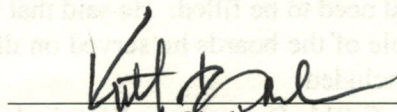
- Bottom Area Project
- VDOT Projects
- Safe Routes to School
- McArthur Street Traffic Signal
- Main Street Sidewalk Improvements
- Primary Paving
- E. Stuart Drive Sidewalk Project
- Galax Elementary School Renovations
- Stormwater Projects
- T.G. Vaughan Furniture Plant Study
- Several Misc. projects regarding Covid-19, Stormwater Ordinance revision, MRPDC assistance, Animal Shelter pre-bid for project, numerous calls, emails, complaints, etc., BRCEDA meetings regarding departure of manager.

Mayor Mitchell presented a plaque of appreciation to Vice Mayor Plichta for her service of over 16 years serving on City Council. Vice Mayor Plichta had many well wishes from the Council members. She thanked everyone and said she would miss them.

With no further discussion, Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion for the meeting to adjourn. 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.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:07 p.m.


Mayor


Clerk