

Galax City Council
Minutes
November 9, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on November 9, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Greene called the meeting to order with the following Council persons present and they are as listed: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

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

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 5, 2020. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

In special action, Mayor Greene administered the Oath of Office to newly hired Galax Police Officer, Amber Miller.

Keith Barker, City Manager, made a request of Council to amend our current FY2021 budget for the following projects:

- Recreation Center Pool HVAC, \$100,000 – Mr. Barker explained this project had been discussed at the last two City Council meetings as part of a budget amendment. The anticipated cost for the new system was \$100,000 and he proposed that we reduce part time help funding at the Recreation Center by a like amount, reflecting the reduced programs due to Covid. He said while we hoped that we could do some repairs, it was very likely we would have to replace this system during the fiscal year.
- Main Street Pedestrian Safety Project, \$55,000 – Mr. Barker explained this project was awarded to the City; however, he did not think we would begin the project this year and did not include it in the FY2021 Budget. He said that Jimmy Moss, Project Manager, had been working on the project and we were at the 50% design submittal phase with VDOT. Mr. Barker said we do not anticipate completing the design this fiscal year, but we did need to amend the budget to reflect revenue and expenses. He noted this project was a 100% grant funded project.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the budget amendments as presented. Vice Mayor Mitchell seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker announced that he was pleased to inform Council of new grants we had received since the October Council meeting:

- Petco Foundation, \$20,000 – Mr. Barker explained that Jessica Boyer, Shelter Supervisor, contacted Petco concerning the difficulty of immunizing cats on entry to the shelter, simply due to the volume of cats received and costs. The Petco Foundation awarded the shelter \$20,000 towards cat vaccines, which he said may be used until all funds had been expended. The expectation was that the funds would last for a few years and unspent funds would be reflected as carryover funds in future budgets. There was no match for this grant.
- DHCD Planning Grant, Housing Project, \$40,000 – Mr. Barker informed Council that we had been notified that we were awarded up to \$40,000 by DHCD for a housing planning grant. The first \$3,000 was available for pre-planning activities and after review, DHCD would award the additional funds, up to \$40,000, for a full grant submittal. Mr. Barker advertised a Request for Qualifications for consultants and they were due by November 6. He said the current Bottom Area Management Team would be the working group at this time and he said we had set December 1 at 6:00 PM as the public information meeting, location to be determined.
- Twin County Community Foundation, \$12,000 – Mr. Barker said we had been notified by the TCCF that we had been awarded two grants totaling \$12,000. The first grant was for the installation of automatic door openers at the Municipal Building (\$4500). The second grant was for a pool wheel chair and adult changing table at the Recreation Center (\$7500).

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to accept the grants and authorize the City Manager to sign any necessary documents. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker informed Council of a prior request by MRCS to provide CARES Act funding to them for reimbursement of costs beyond December 2020. This request was deferred by Council until this meeting. Mr. Barker explained while they were

eligible for funds from the state for costs through December, they were not after that date. He said this was the same criteria that the City was under so any funding we provided would potentially be a duplication of funds they were eligible for at this time, or would be held beyond December 30, 2020 making any purchases ineligible under the current guidelines. Mr. Barker said since MRCS was eligible for state funding for their expenses the request for funding was not permitted within the CARES Act guidelines. The consensus by Council was not to consider the request.

Keith Barker gave an update of the CARES Act funding progress. Mr. Barker informed Council of other possible expenditures that were eligible and needs that had been identified:

- **Janitorial Services Vehicle, \$25,000** – Mr. Barker said the Janitor’s current vehicle was one of the worst in our fleet. At this time, he services all facilities as the central point for receipt of cleaning supplies and PPE as most delivery trucks would not go to each building due to Covid restrictions. He said that he also did the larger spray cleaning on facilities and was the first contact if we needed to

deep clean. The City's auditor indicated this would be an eligible expense. Mr. Barker requested Council to permit approximately \$30,000 for the purchase of a vehicle. Mr. Barker added that a 2019 Ford was being looked at closely. The cost would be around \$23,000.

- **Galax Grayson EMS, \$25,000** – Mr. Barker informed Council that GGEMS was applying for \$25,000 in funding from Grayson County and we would match that funding with \$25,000. This would permit GGEMS to purchase three (3) CPR machines that allowed hands off CPR by staff. These machines were approximately \$16,000 each. The GGEMS Board approved the purchase pending funds from Galax and Grayson.
- **Galax Fire Department Ambulance, \$50,000** – Keith Barker explained the GFD Ambulance was a “grandfathered” vehicle in regards to state certification and was used by the GFD on each scene. It is a 2000 Ford F350 chassis with an older box, but the truck did not meet new requirements since it was smaller than the current F450 requirements and it was not re-certified by the state a few months ago. The GFD recently purchased a used 2011 F450 ambulance from Pipers Gap that was certified, would allow them to have it present on all fire calls, and permitted them to run Pipers Gap coverage area as backup for ems services. He said a vehicle like this was permitted as a purchase under CARES Act since it serves medical needs and the old vehicle was removed from service. Mr. Barker said the intent would be to reimburse GFD for the purchase since it occurred within the CARES Act timeframe and was a permitted expense.
- **Revision of Rooftop Program** – Keith Barker made Council aware of a request by Rooftop in which they asked to amend their program funds. He said they were continuing to spend funds in the rental/mortgage assistance and Covid care baskets for seniors, but did not believe they would expend all funds. They requested to use a portion of funds to purchase books for virtual students that were not able to get to a school or public library. All funds were within the amount we provided to Rooftop.
- **Additional Uniforms, GPD, \$3800** – Keith Barker explained with the recent offers of employment to 3 new officers, Chief Cooper had asked that we provide additional funding from CARES Act to provide additional uniforms. The cost to fully outfit all 3 officers was approximately \$7600 with half from our regular uniform budget and the other half from CARES Act..
- **Galax Health Department, \$5000** – Keith Barker made Council aware of a request by Dr. Shelton, Mount Rogers District Health Director. The request of the City consisted of the consideration of sharing costs on a generator that would run the refrigerators that hold vaccines at the local health department. The concept was that once vaccines were received; a possible power loss could jeopardize the vaccines. Bland County installed one last year for approximately \$10,000. Mr. Barker said he had not received any supporting documentation at the time of the agenda but did include it due to timing issues with CARES Act funds.

Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the following CARES Act funding items: Janitorial vehicle, Galax Grayson EMS funding, Galax Fire Dept. ambulance funding, GPD uniform funding, and Galax Health Dept. shared cost for generator. Councilwoman White seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve amending the Rooftop Program to allow the purchase of books for virtual students. Councilman Warr seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr. Councilwoman Ritchie abstained due to a potential business conflict.

Keith Barker informed Council that we were notified by VDOT that our revenue sharing application for the S. Main St./Calhoun St. Stormwater project was being funded, but not until FY2025 and as a Priority 2 project. He said that he spoke to our VDOT representative and no Priority 2 projects were recommended for full funding at the requested level except the Galax project. Mr. Barker further said with the next round of applications, we did not think any new projects would be prioritized before FY2027. The funding they would be providing did not take into account inflation, however, he said once we were funded, we would become a Priority 1 project and could submit supplemental applications to account for cost increases between now and FY2025. Mr. Barker said by speaking with VDOT and staff, the recommendation was the acceptance of the grant as presented and a reprioritization of stormwater projects. Keith Barker made a request of Council to submit the first phase of the Oldtown Street Stormwater project as our next project under the VDOT Revenue Sharing application, assuming that this was a FY2027 project. He said we would then begin design next calendar year for the Swanson Street Stormwater Project, but use City stormwater funds only instead of VDOT grant and City funds. Mr. Barker said it was believed that this was a more responsive method to keep projects on track rather than waiting for FY2027 funding for the Swanson St. Stormwater Project. The proposed order of projects included:

- FY2021 - Parkwood Drive (City Funds, \$250,000)
- FY2022-FY2023 - Swanson St. Project (City Funds, \$1.3M)
- FY2025-FY2026 - S. Main St./Calhoun St. (VDOT Revenue Sharing, 50/50 grant)
- FY2027-FY2028 - Oldtown St. Phase I (VDOT Revenue Sharing Application, 50/50 grant)

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the S. Main St./Calhoun St. Stormwater Project funding as proposed by VDOT. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

Councilman Larowe made the motion to authorize staff to submit the Oldtown St. Phase I Stormwater Project. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker announced the continuity of operations ordinance Council adopted concerning Covid was expiring. A copy of a new ordinance was given to Council for review and consideration, as recommended by our attorney. Mr. Barker said since this was an ordinance, it would require a public hearing. Councilman Warr made the motion to set December 14 for a public hearing for the Continuity of Operations Ordinance. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

Chief Dewitt Cooper of the Galax Police Department made a request of Council to consider the adoption of a Qualified Immunity Resolution. He said the revocation of qualified immunity was a topic on the legislative special session docket and it was expected to be considered during the 2021 General Assembly Session. The resolution as presented requested that qualified immunity not be revoked or reduced; as the opinion of the police community, VML, VACO, etc. was that this would cause frivolous lawsuits for minor police interactions. The resolution would recognize that citizens should have recourse for cases with merit. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the Qualified Immunity Resolution as presented. Vice Mayor Mitchell seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker informed Council that we were contacted by Adams Paving concerning a project they were working on outside the City that would produce asphalt millings. He said while we could use some of the product, we did not have the need or capacity for all of it. Mr. Barker said that he and Charles Joyce, Public Works Director, proposed that the City accepted the millings and have a 1-day Saturday sale similar to what we did a year or so ago using City staff to load and handle traffic. He said the product would be deeply discounted at \$10 to \$20 per bucket from a backhoe or loader. Mr. Barker said if Council was in agreement, we would work to plan the event when the product was available and the weather would permit. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to proceed with accepting the millings and approve the sale of them at a later date. Councilwoman White seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Keith Barker gave the City Manager Report. He explained this was an overview of the status of various projects and initiatives that were underway with the City or with regional boards that he was a part of. These updated included:

- Bottom Area Project, Eastview Phase
- VDOT Projects
- Galax Elementary School Renovations
- Galax Wastewater Treatment Plant and Pump Station
- Stormwater Projects
- T.G. Vaughan Furniture Plant Study, VT Economic Development Department
- Participated in the VML Conference.
- Animal Shelter - The project has begun.
- Responded to numerous emails, calls, complaints, etc. throughout the month. Participated in numerous project progress meetings.
- Covid-19, Continued to meet with various departments and facilities about the Covid issue, reviewed numerous emails and other info on the coronavirus. Continued work on the CARES Act.
- Received applications and conducted reviews for the small business program. Completed reviews and have awarded almost 100 grants to date.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- ❖ Councilman Larrowe thanked everyone who participated in the strategic planning meeting recently and discussed it briefly. He also spoke about a project management software for projects and self-tracking. Councilman Larrowe later reminded Council that he had spoken to Mary Ellen Vaught regarding the \$20,000 contributions from Galax & Grayson toward the shelter expansion project. He said that Ms. Vaught was attending a Carroll Board of Supervisors meeting that night to request a matching contribution to the Galax-Carroll-Grayson Animal Shelter expansion project. Keith Barker said we were still \$30,000 short on finishing the exterior portion of the north side of the shelter. Everyone was hopeful that Carroll would agree to the request. Mr. Barker noted that Ms. Vaught alone had raised \$70,000 to \$80,000 in donations for the shelter project.
- ❖ Councilman Haynes encouraged Council to take a look at and offer feedback on the strategic planning project that Councilman Larrowe had worked hard on. He said that it looked really good. Also, he made Council aware that he had won the Scavenger Hunt at VML. He said that he had won a feature in a magazine where he could highlight a local attraction that he liked. He said that he had chosen to concentrate on the T.G. Vaughan building and promoting that project within this magazine article.
- ❖ Vice Mayor Mitchell discussed democracy and he described it as a fragile thing that could be broken easily. He said when this occurred, anarchy and destruction would follow. He just had this on his mind and wanted to share.
- ❖ Councilwoman Ritchie announced the “Drive Thru” Trick or Treating was a very successful event.
- ❖ Councilwoman White informed Council that she had recently joined the Celebrate Recovery Group to participate in the Saturday trash pick up & community clean up that this group had been doing in the Galax area. She said it was very inspirational listening to this group and how they had overcome their obstacles and how they were making positive changes in our community. There were approximately 30 that participated. Chief Cooper gave a “shout out” to thank Zeke Morton for always getting the equipment together for the clean up events at a moments notice.
- ❖ Councilman Warr noted that when the first movie night was done down town, that a group of people just came together quickly and easily to volunteer to clean up the lot at the gazebo where the movie would be showed. He asked that we support these types of

clean up events however we could. He said it was just good for our community. Councilwoman Ritchie noted what a good job the community service workers were doing after hours in the evenings. Councilman Warr gave an update on the Pumpkin Decorating Contest and discussed briefly. He was happy this was a good attraction for the down town area.

- ❖ Mayor Greene reminded Council that VML was having Zoom type meetings on several informative topics. He encouraged everyone to join in.

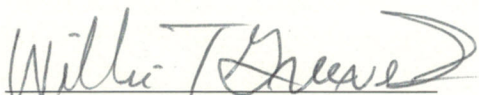
With no further public comments, Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor Mitchell at 7:16 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia:

- **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.
- **Real Property – § 2.2-3711 A.3 of the *Code of Virginia*** - Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.
- **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 Greene, Vice-Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

At 8:08 p.m. Council reconvened in open session. Mayor Greene 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 Greene, Vice-Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:08 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

