

Galax City Council
Minutes
December 14, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on December 14, 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, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene informed Council that Vice Mayor Mitchell and Councilwoman White desired to join the meeting via telephone. Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to approve the request. 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.

Councilman Warr 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 November 9, 2020. 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 Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

In special action, Mayor Greene administered the Oath of Office to two newly hired Galax Police Officers, Holly Campbell and Mitchell Lineberry. The Mayor and Council welcomed the officers to the City.

Mayor Greene announced this was the date set for a public hearing which concerned the continuity of operations ordinance due to Covid-19 issues. Keith Barker noted the original ordinance had expired. He said the proposed ordinance was drafted and recommended by the City's attorney. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments. With no comments made, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the adoption of the 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 Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker gave an update on the CARES Act funding for the City. He explained this was our final month of CARES Act spending and we had committed or spent the funds allocated to the City. The following was a final request for funds and a summary of our expenditures.

- a. Galax Fire Dept. Food Drive, \$30,000 – Mr. Barker made Council aware of a request to consider and approve \$30,000 towards the annual GFD Food Drive. He explained the program provided food boxes to 550 families in the region. With the cancelation of other annual fundraisers this year, the concern was that any shortfall on fundraising would require the GFD to spend their funds for the drive.

- b. Update – Mr. Barker informed Council that with the final request for funds for the GFD food drive, he believed that any remaining funds would be assigned to personnel costs or unemployment costs incurred in December. He said while not an exact total, with the CARES Act funds we had been able to put money towards the following programs or needs:

• Small Business Grants	\$221,800
• Meals/Food Assistance Programs	\$165,000
• GPD & GFD Uniforms/Turnout Gear	\$135,000
• GFD EMS Vehicle	\$ 50,000
• GGEMS CPR Equipment	\$ 25,000
• HVAC Equipment Upgrades	\$ 70,000
• Janitorial Services/Cleaning Supplies	\$ 32,000
• Janitor’s Vehicle	\$ 23,400
• Galax Health Dept. Supplies and Generator	\$ 15,000
• Rooftop of VA, Rent and other assistance	\$ 25,000
• Staffing costs	\$275,000

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the request of the \$30,000 CARES Act allocation for the GFD Food Drive. 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.

Ms. Trish Fore was recently promoted to the position of Regional Director for the Galax-Carroll Regional Library. Ms. Fore, a long-term employee with the library introduced herself and to update Council on programs and offerings at the library. Vice Mayor Mitchell thanked Ms. Fore and commented how important libraries are to cities.

Laura Whitt, Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce, was present to discuss community initiatives that the Chamber of Commerce has been undertaking. Keith Barker said that he and Emily Brown, Tourism Director, met with Ms. Whitt and Mr. Anthony Edwards of the Chamber to discuss the upcoming year, coordination of events, assistance the City can provide, etc.

Judy Bolt, HR Director, informed Council of a social media policy draft that she asked for City Council to consider. She said the policy came from VML as one of their recommended draft policies. Ms. Bolt said while we did not intend to restrict staff in personal speech, nor do we want to review personal pages and posts on a continuing basis, we hoped to provide guidelines of what are acceptable posts and pictures from staff when using social media or other platforms. The intent was to educate and set guidelines for appropriate public posts and help staff recognize that their actions can represent both themselves personally and the City. Councilman Larrowe commented that he felt the policy update was too soft and recommended that the City’s attorney review before approving. The consensus from Council was to hold off until it was reviewed.

Keith Barker announced as part of the Department of Housing and Community Development housing grant application we were developing; we must conduct a public hearing. Mr. Barker asked Council to set January 11, 2021 as the date for the public hearing. Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to approve January 11, 2021 for the public hearing. 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 Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker informed Council that one of the items identified as a need during the 2020 Vision document was an updated comprehensive plan. He said our current plan was from 2012 and was done as an abbreviated plan at that time. He said while we budgeted for an update in the FY2021 budget, we eliminated it as a project in response to anticipated budget reductions due to Covid. Mr. Barker said the recent Council facilitated session, and an overall desire by Council to further engage citizens in the long-term planning of the City, he proposed to see if Council would be willing to add this item back into the budget for work that would begin in FY2021 and may carry over to FY2022.

Mr. Barker spoke to Aaron Sizemore, MRPDC Executive Director, who said they had planning staff time available to dedicate to this effort if we wanted to proceed. He said to have a more thorough plan, we would look to have facilitated sessions with Council, the Planning Commission, and a website/mass mailing to citizens and businesses. Effort would be spent on looking at infrastructure, projects (T.G. Vaughan Plant, Galax East Site, Kipling Lane Property, housing projects), community needs, business recruitment/incentives, etc.

Mr. Barker said if there was a desire from Council to move forward with this planning, he asked that Council would consider moving \$20,000 from *10.40.9900.1140 Contingency* to a new line item for this project. Mayor Mitchell made the motion to move forward with the Comprehensive Plan and move the \$20,000 from *10.40.9900.1140 Contingency* to a new line item for this 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.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Keith Barker gave Council an overview of the status of various projects and initiatives that are underway with the City or with regional boards he was part of. These included the following:

- Bottom Area Project, Eastview Phase
- VDOT Projects
- Galax Elementary School Renovations
- Stormwater Projects
- T.G. Vaughan Furniture Plant Study, VT Economic Development Department
- Animal Shelter

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Vice Mayor Mitchell – discussed the distribution of the Covid vaccine.
- Councilwoman White – spoke about participating in a 7th grade civics class and what students liked, don't like, and what are highs and lows in the community.
- Councilman Warr – discussed businesses open on Friday nights, 22 total, and that all events help at this time. Welcomed Senior Home Share to the downtown.
- Councilwoman Ritchie – Spoke about downtown and asked if we were prepared for snow.
- Councilman Haynes – Distributed thank you cards for various businesses, High Country Lights, and our sanitation workers.

- Councilman Larrowe – Discussed CARES Act and our spending with 42% directed to small businesses and other vital community support. Spoke about the TG Vaughan Building being recommended for historic tax credits and work group for the project. Spoke about BRCEA obtaining a grant for the remaining funds needed for natural gas lines to Wildwood. Reminded Council that while we have heard from citizens and businesses upset with the stormwater fee, we have obtained a grant of \$919,000 based on those fees. Spoke in favor the comprehensive plan being a road map for the future.
- Mayor Greene – expressed appreciation for all city workers and asked about the downtown.

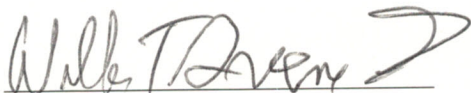
With no further public comments, Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor Mitchell at 7:32 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Codes of Virginia:

- **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 Warr 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 7:45 p.m.



 Mayor



 Clerk