

Galax City Council
Minutes
May 26, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session by conference call on May 26, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Mitchell called the meeting to order.

Councilwoman White 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 May 11, 2020, and to approve the called meeting of May 19, 2020. Councilman Greene seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date advertised to consider the FY2021 Galax City Budget. The proposed budget reflected the following tax rates:

	<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

Keith Barker explained that we made one additional change on the budget which was to carry over funds for the capital repairs at the fire department to replace air lines. He said while it was budgeted in this year, Chief Hankley did not think they could solicit and complete the work this current budget year. Mr. Barker said it would be about a \$14,000 line item. He closed by saying as of the time the agenda was prepared, there were no public comments in regards to the budget as advertised. With no further comments, Mayor Mitchell concluded the public hearing. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to close the public hearing. Vice Mayor Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Mayor Mitchell announced this was the date advertised to accept comments on the revisions to the fee structure in the Stormwater Ordinance. Keith Barker informed Council that he did not receive any emails, letters or phone calls. He said that he had one question through the Commissioner of Revenue’s office. Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed. After a brief discussion among Council members, Councilman Larrowe made the motion to adopt the revised Stormwater Ordinance. Vice Mayor Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken

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

Mayor Mitchell announced the next item for consideration was the Emergency Ordinance for Continuity of Government. Keith Barker explained that Council adopted the emergency ordinance for continuity of government on March 23, 2020. He said the draft ordinance stated it was in effect for 6 months, however our charter required emergency ordinances to be advertised and adopted within 60 days of approval. He explained that Council had a called meeting on May 19, 2020 and adopted the emergency ordinance again to carry over to the May 26, 2020 meeting. Mr. Barker said as of the time the agenda was prepared, there were no public comments in regards to the emergency ordinance as advertised. City Council was asked to consider final adoption of the ordinance as presented with the understanding that the emergency ordinance would be valid for 6 months or until the Governor declares the current pandemic event and emergency over. Councilwoman White made the motion to approve the emergency ordinance. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Mayor Mitchell informed Council the next item was consideration of the Galax City School Budget for FY2021. He explained City Council had conducted public comment periods and held discussions on the FY2021 Galax City Schools budget. City Council was asked to consider approval of the school budget so administration can enter into contracts with staff for the upcoming school year. Mayor Mitchell said that current request to the City was \$3,986,291 in operational support, which was a level funding request for FY2021. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the Galax City Schools budget for FY2020/21. Councilwoman White seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Mayor Mitchell informed Council of the next item which was the request by AEP for an easement that would impact a portion of the property at Monta Vista Cemetery. He said at the last meeting a public comment period was opened. Keith Barker said he had not received any letters, phone calls or emails regarding the AEP easement request. Mr. Barker gave a brief description of the area the easement would impact. He said that large wooden poles would be used. Vice Mayor Plichta made the motion to approve the AEP easement and appoint Keith Barker to sign any necessary paperwork related to the easement. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Keith Barker gave Council an update on the CARES Act. He explained the we were notified by the State Secretary of Finance on Tuesday May 12 that the City was being allocated \$553,751 in federal funds through the CARES Act. He said with a timeline of responding to the state by May 22, we had signed and returned our acceptance of the funds and expect them in June. He said the funds could be used for a number of purposes related to the Covid-19 response; however, they could not be used for lost revenue. Mr. Barker said while we were gathering current funds expended, we do anticipate the majority of funds to be available in FY2021 and they must be spent by December 30, 2020. He named some uses anticipated in the current fiscal year which would include any leave incurred due to Covid-19 related issues, unemployment benefits, PPE and other supplies. He said were also looking at other equipment such as credit card readers, additional laptops to allow remote work, sterilizing equipment for the PD, Municipal Building, and perhaps DSS, etc. Mr. Barker closed by saying the vast majority of the funds would be spent in the FY2021 budget year. He added that budget line items for the funds had been created. He said we would bring a budget amendment back to Council for FY2020 & FY2021 once adopted and we could show where funds were spent. After a short discussion between Keith Barker and Council, Mayor Mitchell noted that this was something that would hopefully allow us help a lot of folks.

Mayor Mitchell informed Council of a number of appointments to various local boards that would be expiring on June 30. Keith Barker said while some individuals were eligible for reappointment, others were not and Council was asked to consider advertising those appointments. The board appointments included:

- **Recreation Advisory Board** – There were three seats on the Recreation Advisory Board that were expiring. Ms. Josepha Thompson and Ms. Susie Willis had both expressed an interest in being reappointed. Mr. Eugene McCurdy's 2nd term would expire and he would not be eligible for an additional term. This would be a 2-year term and would run through June 30, 2022. An advertisement could be run for the appointment if Council chose.
- **Board of Zoning Appeals** – Mr. John Adams' appointment to the BZA would be expiring on June 30, 2020 and he had asked to be re-appointed. This would be a 5-year term but the seat would be court appointed based on a recommendation from City Council.
- **District III** – Councilman Larrowe currently serves as the appointee to this board which would expire on June 30. Councilwoman Ritchie currently serves as the alternate. Council may wish to consider making those appointments at this time.
- **MRPDC** – Councilman Greene's appointment would be set to expire June 30. Council may wish to consider his appointment at this time.
- **IDA** – Ms. Amanda Archer's appointment would be set to expire June 30. She expressed an interest being re-appointed to the 4-year term.

After a discussion, Mayor Mitchell called for a motion concerning the re-appointments of the individuals that had been previously named on each board. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the re-appointments of those on each board who had agreed to serve again, and to advertise the open position on the Parks & Recreation board. Councilwoman White seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Keith Barker gave an update to Council regarding the T. G. Vaughan Plant. Mr. Barker noted that as Council was aware, we had applied for and were awarded \$70,000 from Opportunity Appalachia (OA) to perform additional work on the TG Vaughan project including: community engagement meetings, historic tax reviews, a market analysis, financial feasibility study, etc. He said also included in the project would be a preliminary architectural review that would include measurements and drawings of the existing building as well as possible layouts for the new uses. He said the match to the grant was \$5,000 for a total cost of \$75,000. The firm (partnership) selected by OA to perform the work included Summit Engineering, Opportunity Virginia, and Main St. America. Mr. Barker said we were familiar with Summit Engineering and their work on the Bottom Area Projects, and Opportunity Virginia and Becca Richardson. He explained unless Council directed staff otherwise, his thought was that the City provide the \$5000 match amount since this was not a Vaughan Furniture Company project but more of a local economic development project and feasibility study. He said the funds could come from the economic development line item in the budget unless Council directed otherwise. Councilman Larrowe commented that as a member of the committee, he felt the proposal was very good. He noted that he was very excited for the opportunity for that project to move forward. He said our cost was minimal to advance the project and he hoped the rest of Council felt the same way. Councilman Greene made the motion to approve \$5000 match toward the Vaughan project. Councilwoman White seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Keith Barker made a request of Council to move the June 8 meeting to June 15. He explained with the requirement for a reassessment public hearing to be no sooner than 30 days after advertisement, City Council would need to move your regular meeting date from June 8 to June 15 or have a called meeting on June 15. Councilwoman White made the motion to approve the changed meeting date. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following spoken affirmations: Mayor Mitchell – “yea”, Councilman Larrowe – “yea”, Councilwoman White – “yea”, Vice Mayor Plichta – “yea”, Councilman Greene – “yea”, Councilwoman Ritchie – “yea”, and Councilwoman Haynes – “yea”.

Mayor Mitchell noted that there we had not received any public comments to discuss. Mayor Mitchell asked for any other business to be brought forth. Councilman Greene asked if the reorganizational meeting would be held in June. Keith Barker said it would be held in July. For the charter, it would be the first meeting after July 1. Councilman Greene added that he wanted to be transparent with everyone. He said he had decided to throw his hat in for the Mayor position. He said it had nothing to do with the job that Mayor Mitchell does. He said he was doing a perfect job and always had. He said he had supported him for 20 years with no strings attached. He said he'd appreciate any support he could get. Mayor Mitchell thanked Councilman Greene for his comments. He said Willie was well known across the state and well connected. He closed by saying that Councilman Greene was a good man. Councilman Greene thanked Mayor Mitchell.

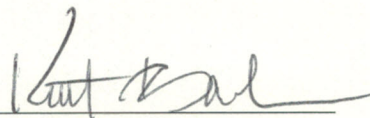
Vice Mayor Plichta asked Keith Barker for an update from the health department on our Covid-19 rates. Mr. Barker gave an update with the current figures from Captain Cox from GPD. He said the City had 50 active cases, 62 recovered. He discusses statistics from Carroll & Grayson as well. He said numbers had been going up much slower but as people were now getting out into the community, he urged everyone to continue to be very careful. There were additional discussions regarding the pandemic by Council. Mr. Barker said that he would continue to monitor the Governor's phase 1 & 2 plans. He said that depending on the Governor's plan, there was a possibility of holding the next Council meeting on June 15 in person – with precautions and following the requirements of the state.

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

ADJOURNMENT 7:05 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

