

Galax City Council
Minutes
September 14, 2020

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on September 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, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene 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 August 10, 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. Councilman Haynes asked that we include more detail on Council's notes in the future.

C.C. Kurtz, Chairman of the Electoral Board introduced David Phipps who was recently hired as the General Registrar for the City. Council welcomed Mr. Phipps. Councilwoman Ritchie asked if voters could still drop off ballots at the night drop box. Mr. Phipps indicated they could still do so and they were looking at purchasing new signage and gave an overview of the 45-day voting period.

Mayor Greene announced this was the date Council set for the public hearing on amendments to the Galax Enterprise Zone. It was noted that only one public hearing was required instead of two as originally indicated. City Manager, Keith Barker gave an overview of the proposed amendments. The map given to Council reflected the amended portion of the zone. He said the intent of the amendments were to remove areas in residential districts and add the areas that included the Food City Shopping Center & the shopping center with Hobby Lobby. He explained that all owners of the properties that were proposed to be moved from the district were notified by mail. There were only 2 callers in response to that letter and neither had objections with the amendment. He also sent our draft application to DHCD and had a conference call with them. Mr. Barker said they conducted a preliminary review and believe our application was correct in its reasoning and need. He also informed Grayson County and Carroll County of the need for approval of a joint resolution pending Council's decision. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments. With no comments made, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the Enterprise Zone amendments and adopt the attached resolution and local assurances. Councilman Larrowe 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.

Mayor Greene announced this was the date set for the Hospital Provider Assessment Ordinance public hearing as requested by TCRH and discussed last month. Keith Barker gave an overview of the request which consisted of the consideration to adopt an ordinance that would allow possible funding back to TCRH through Medicaid funding.

- Greg Pearson, TCRH CEO gave an explanation of the hospital's request. He said Medicaid funds were based on patients and hospital utilization. There would be an MOA that would hold the City harmless.

- Vivian Giles Hayes, Sands Anderson, spoke briefly and explained the ordinance. She said she had worked with one locality who is participating with no issues. Ms. Hayes noted that the City could work to bill the hospital one or more times per year as Medicaid funds were available. She said there would be no liability to the City.
- Councilman Larrowe asked if the billing would occur on a fixed schedule and said that some language was not specific. Ms. Hayes, Sands Anderson, said that there was no fixed billing and that the hospital and state determine when billing and funding are eligible. She said the language was flexible to allow for the funding schedule.
- Vice Mayor Mitchell verified that this was not an assessment on a patient's bill. Mr. Pearson, TCRH confirmed that was prohibited.
- Keith Barker said he had spoken to Corbin Stone, RFC, with no issues.

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 Hospital Provider Assessment Ordinance. 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 gave Council an update on the City's FY2021 budget and projections. He specifically discussed sales tax, meals tax, and lodging tax. The following figures were presented in the August financial report that we had collected the following year to date vs. the projected collections:

Tax Category	Collected	Budgeted	Difference
Sales Tax	\$ 433,786.00	\$ 346,433.00	\$ 87,353.00
Meals Tax	\$ 345,000.00	\$ 298,700.00	\$ 46,300.00
Lodging Tax	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 19,664.00	\$ 5,336.00
	\$ 803,786.00	\$ 664,797.00	\$ 138,989.00

Mr. Barker noted while these categories were up, he said we were behind on recreation center revenue, court fines and forfeitures, and other misc. categories. He said we had not received notification yet from VDOT on our allocation for this fiscal year, however he had spoken to staff and expected the same level of funding as we had budgeted.

Keith Barker gave an update on a previous request from the Galax Public Arts Committee. The request involved a proposed crosswalk and intersection painting project that would paint quilting patterns at the S. Main St/Oldtown St intersection, the Main St./Grayson St. intersection, and the N. Main St./Center St. intersection. At the last meeting safety concerns arose and it was decided to present the proposed project to VDOT for review and recommendations. The following are some points that Mr. Barker shared from a VDOT staff email:

- **Safety** – The Manual on Traffic Control Devices did not recognize street art as a control device and was considered a possible distraction or hazard by encouraging delays by pedestrians in the intersection. If street art at a crosswalk was used, then it should be subdued in color, design, etc. A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) interpretation letter gave acceptable instances of crosswalk design, again calling out that they should be between the transverse lines (white) in the crosswalk. There was some thought that the FHWA would conduct a research study this year focused on crosswalk and intersection art.

- **Traction** – Highway paint was tested in 4” wide margins for durability and skid resistance. If larger areas were painted, such as an entire intersection, there could be issues with traction. If the larger area was considered, then there should be verification that VDOT approved paints for highways were used and not simply “traffic rated” paint. This may reduce the colors available to the white and more earth tones as called out earlier in the memo.
- **Maintenance** – There was a concern over durability and fading, especially in the wheel path track and where snow removal would occur.

Mr. Barker said after a review and comparison to the federal/state regulations, VDOT staff had made a suggestion that the Committee consider another area such as a parking lot as a test area for the ground mural to see how paint would hold up both color-wise and to traffic. He said he had concluded from VDOT staffing review that there was a concern with the safety issues and long-term maintenance. City staff concurred with the VDOT review and suggestion. There was discussion on other examples of art and where to do the test portion.

- Councilwoman Ritchie who currently serves on the Art Committee, said an intern had helped with the proposed design and the thought was that it could be laid out then painted by the Art Committee.
- Councilman Warr said that he was more used to seeing this type project in a crosswalk and not an intersection. He said he would like to see it specific to Galax.
- Councilwoman White discussed the idea of a Galax leaves on the sidewalks.
- Discussed on possible locations for the art at the Recreation Department or on a crosswalk a block off Main Street.

Keith Barker concluded by saying he that planned to meet with Chris Pollins, CCSA Director to discuss the issue further.

Keith Barker presented a request from Mount Rogers Community Service seeking CARES Act funds from Galax. He said this request was sent to each community in their region. Mr. Barker spoke with Sandy Bryant, MRCS Executive Director, who explained that they could be reimbursed through the state for PPE purchases, but the funds would not be available beyond December. He said this was the same criteria our CARES Act funds had. He did a poll with other administrators and none were recommending to their boards that they consider the request. Mr. Barker said the administrators in the MRCS region have had continued discussions with them regarding fees for service (CPMT services through foster care), revenue they generate, etc. He said based on our use of the CARES Act funds and what we had planned and obligated, he did not recommend acting on this at this time; although Council could choose to take action, hold this over to see how our CARES Act funds were actually spent, take no action, or direct staff to see how other partner localities were addressing the request. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to hold off on this request until the November meeting. 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 gave an update on the Galax Elementary Renovation Project. He said the project was moving along and expected to be fully completed in October with the final payment in November. He explained Council would need to re-adopt the bond ordinance at the October 5 meeting. Mr. Barker noted that it was possible we would close the loan at an interest rate less than what we anticipated, and if this were to be the case, this would reduce our debt service payments.

Keith Barker informed Council of a request to amend the Stormwater Budget as well as the General Fund Budget. He explained with the recent bidding of the Parkwood Stormwater Project, and other grants received, the need existed for Council to take action to amend the aforementioned budgets.

Stormwater Fund

- a. Parkwood Drive – Stormwater Project, budget amendment – Coomes Construction as the low bid at \$223,345. The project was within the engineers estimate; however, we need to move \$13,000 from line item *40.4.9900.1131 Capital Contingency to 40.4.9900.1133 Parkwood Drainage Basin A* to cover engineering inspection fees.

Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the stormwater budget amendment. 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.

General Fund

- b. Galax East Site – We applied for a received a DHCD planning grant for the Galax East Site that would allow for the RFP to be developed for commercial or health care uses on the property. The funds awarded were \$15,000 and would be used for Mount Rogers Planning District to assist with the RFP development.
- c. Galax Police Department – We applied for and received \$44,485 in funds from DCJS for tough books (computers), software, and a UV decontamination unit for the police department.
- d. CARES funding for Registrar – The Registrar’s Office was awarded \$51,585 in CARES Act funds for conducting the upcoming elections safely. The Registrar has been working to identify how to spend the funds.
- e. USDA Fire Dept Radio Equipment – In FY2020 we were awarded a USDA grant and loan for radio equipment for the GFD. While awarded in the last fiscal year, the GFD was unable to complete the project due to Covid delays with manufacturing and delivery. It was also neglected to be included in the current budget. The \$92,000 was broken down as \$50,000 in a grant and \$42,000 as a loan. The radios were ordered and we anticipate closing the grant and loan in the near future. The grant funds would be matched by the GFD.
- f. VTC Wanderlove grant – The Tourism Department was awarded \$10,000 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation for developing marketing plans for day trips and short stays in the area.

Keith Barker closed by saying the total General Funds Budget Amendment was \$218,620. As the total represents less than 1% of the budget, a public hearing was not required. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the FY2021 budget amendment as presented. Councilman Larrowe 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 discussed a request in which he was asked to provide an overview of the City Code and how curb/gutter or sidewalk requests for construction were handled. He said as part of a subdivision or development, installation of curbs, gutters, piping, roads, sidewalks, etc. were the responsibility of the developer. He explained a number of older developments were installed with ditch lines, lack of curbs, etc. throughout the City. Mr. Barker stated if a group of owners wished to request a curb and gutter in their block, the City Code calls out the method for how this may proceed. For curb and gutter, any request would require that 75% of the owners in that block agree to the request and must agree to 50% of all costs. The other 25% of owners would be assessed their proportionate share and billed through their real estate taxes. The same method would be used for sidewalks, with 60% of owners required to agree to the costs and the remaining 40% assessed through their real estate taxes. After a final price is received, City Council must also approve the

request and construction. This will allow for inclusion in a capital improvement project and budgeting or if you cannot proceed due to budget constraints or other projects in line for funding. Mr. Barker informed Council that we had a request this past year for a quote on curb/gutter, however the owner declined to proceed once the construction estimate was secured. That estimate was approximately \$60 per linear foot however there was limited stormwater pipe and one small drop inlet with no engineering required. A larger neighborhood project may require more engineering and would include higher costs due to stormwater elements, additional piping, etc. The McArthur St. Sidewalk Project was approximately \$500 per LF for sidewalk and minor storm drainage, but included demolition of an existing sidewalk. Sidewalk projects would require an engineer due to ADA design requirements.

A discussion following which included the City's responsibilities, identifying problems, tracking issues, and perhaps assisting in new development through incentives. There was a consensus to hold these issues as discussion items for the next Council work session.

Keith Barker informed Council of a possible repair needed at the Galax Recreation Center. He explained the indoor pool HVAC system was not operating properly and was not performing the dehumidification of the pool area as designed. He said the system was part of the 2004 renovations and while we had attempted to repair it, we were unable to get it operating properly. He said it was a specialized system that pulled humidity from the air and then used that exhaust as a heating system for the pool also. The cost to replace the system was expected to be approximately \$100,000 and would have a 12-week lead time on the equipment. He said that an insurance claim may be filed for the issue. This repair was not included in the current budget. Mr. Barker said Edwin Ward, City Engineer, had spoken to and met with several specialized dealers in this equipment, so time was of concern as winter was approaching and when the system needed to be operating properly. Keith Barker asked Council you consider authorizing the project and give staff until the October 5 meeting to adjust the budget to cover costs. He said while Council included \$187,213 in *Capital Reserve line item 9102-6018*, he would like to look at other possible line items for transfer to this capital project. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to proceed with the 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 Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene announced the Carroll Galax Grayson Solid Waste Authority would have a household hazardous waste day on September 26, 2020 from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Materials that would be accepted included paint, pesticides, cleaners, car batteries, etc. Keith Barker said this was for household waste only and was free to the public. The flyer was posted on our social media page and webpage and the CCGSWA would run ads in the paper.

Keith Barker gave Council an update on the Vision 2020 Communications Plan. He said that Emily Brown, Tourism Director, and Councilman Larrowe were still working on the draft document and it would be presented at an upcoming Council meeting.

Mayor Greene discussed that he was planning to develop a column for the Galax Gazette, "Minute with the Mayor". He said that it would either be a monthly or quarterly publication. Councilman Warr suggested having a top 5 list. Mayor Greene said he welcomed Council comments and items for the column.

Keith Barker presented information to Council regarding an update on the T. G. Vaughan Project. This update included an assessment, structural assessment, and Brownsfield Study. He said that a copy of a synopsis from Summit Design had been given to Council prior to the meeting. Councilman Larrowe asked that Mr. Barker get a gantt timeline chart for Council. Councilman Haynes commented that this was an exciting project.

Keith Barker said Council had asked about setting a date for a planning session. There was a consensus to set a date and time. He said the Council Chamber area would be reserved for this and he would send an email to everyone with dates and times.

Keith Barker gave informed Council regarding a website update. He explained that Emily Brown was soliciting website designers for proposals on updating our City website and the Tourism Department website. He said that we had solicited ideas from staff and had been reviewing various sites for ideas. Mr. Barker closed by saying as we progressed further with the project, we would report back to Council.

Mr. Barker informed Council he was contacted by a resident on Ford Ave. concerning truck noise due to engine braking and speed. He explained Council amended the speed limit on the eastbound Rt. 58 lane to 35 mph between Armory Road and Waugh Dr. in an effort to have trucks slow down prior to the grade that approaches the Main St. intersection. He said we also had signs installed for trucks using lower gears on the grade. Council spoke at that time about a Jake brake ordinance; however, enforcement was the issue. He said if Council chose to, he could speak to our attorney or solicit information from other communities on its effectiveness and how it was typically handled in court. Mr. Barker noted another option would be to move the 35 mph signs further towards Greenville Road. After a short discussion, there was a consensus for Mr. Barker to talk with Chief Cooper and report back.

Mayor Greene gave Council a reminder that the next meeting date would be on October 5.

City Manager Report

Keith Barker gave a brief overview of the status of various projects and initiatives that were underway with the City or with regional boards that he was part of. He invited Council to ask questions or for additional information. The topics included:

- Bottom Area Project, Eastview Phase
- VDOT Projects
- Galax Elementary School Renovations
- Galax Wastewater Treatment Plant and Pump Station Upgrades
- Stormwater Projects
- T. G. Vaughan Furniture Plant Study, VT Economic Development Dept.
- MRPDC Assistance
- Animal Shelter Project
- Numerous emails, calls, complaints, etc.
- COVID-19
- Attended various project progress meetings

Council Comments

Councilman Larrowe said he would like to give an overview of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) at the next meeting. He participated in an orientation and felt the program was valuable to the region.

Councilman Haynes asked for the City to purchase thank you cards for businesses. He spoke to WCC and noted the need to develop a program for EMT's for the region. Keith Barker indicated he had spoken with Dr. Sprinkle regarding that. Councilman Haynes shared photos of a BMX type

bike trail in Blacksburg, wanted to see if there would be a grant study available that we could do here, adjacent to the New River Trail on the land beside the hospital that the City owns. He mentioned a housing study or plan as well. Mr. Barker responded that VIAA was looking at that.

Councilwoman Ritchie spoke about a possible solution with the blight issues in the area. Keith Barker explained that we may be able to use housing income funds for blight removal and were currently exploring that possibility.

Councilwoman White informed Council that the Early Head Start Program was moving and the Census response was 60% for Galax.

Councilman Warr would like for us to recognize the new businesses on Main Street and treat all with an announcement on our Facebook page. He asked that we include small business recruitment in the upcoming planning session.

Mayor Greene spoke about his discussion with his grandson and perhaps the caboose in Galax near the trail becoming a museum. Councilwoman White said she had spoken with trail staff and it was not suitable.

Mayor Greene invited any public comments to be made at this time. Maxine Boggs spoke thanking Council for discussing the ditch lines. She said nothing had been done in 10 years.

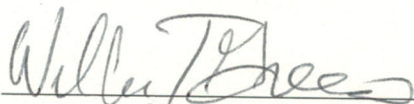
With no further public comments, Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor Mitchell at 8:05 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia:

- **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.
- **Legal Counsel - § 2.2-3711 A.7 of the Code of Virginia** - Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body; and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

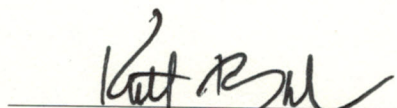
Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice-Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

At 8:39 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 8:39 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

