

GALAX CITY COUNCIL

Minutes

October 10, 2011

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on October 10, 2011 at 7:30 pm.

At 7:30 p.m. Mayor Mitchell called the meeting to order with the following council persons present and they are as listed: Councilwoman Crouse, Councilman Garner, Councilman Lazo, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Webb and Vice-Mayor Greene.

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

Councilman Webb motioned to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on September 12, 2011. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes:, Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea. Councilman Garner –yea, Councilwoman Plichta–yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea.

Council set this date as the public hearing date for consideration of the Regional Water Supply Plan which is referenced in the Regional Drought Ordinance. Chris Gilley of MRPDC spoke on the plan. Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comment. After hearing none he declared the public hearing closed. Councilman Webb motioned to adopt the plan as amended by City staff and to approve the attached resolution approving the Cumberland Plateau, Lenowisco, and Mount Rogers Regional Water Supply Plan. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes:, Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea, Councilman Garner –yea, Councilwoman Plichta–yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea.

Keith Barker updated council on the Mandatory Water Connection Ordinance that was presented to them in September for their review. He explained that the city requires mandatory connection for sewer if it is within 350' of a public line; however there is no such requirement for a water connection. He explained that the concern is there are costs associated with maintaining a water system that supports public health, welfare, safety and property protection; however there is no specific requirement that a property owner must be connected to this system in order to support its operating costs. If individual customers, both small and large, elected to cease purchasing water from the City, it will directly impact rates to remaining customers. Currently rates are in the 25th percentile for Virginia meaning that approximately 75% of localities have higher rates than Galax. He noted that the ordinance does not require someone on a well to cease use of that well, however if the well failed, they would have to connect to the City system provided our service is within 350' of the property line. New water customers would have to connect to City water if service is within 350' of the property line. There is no "non-user fee" meaning that the city is not proposing charging individuals that are not connected to the City system even though they have the benefit of water for fire protection. In the related City Code section 44-7.H it is recommended that if someone currently has a connection to a well and City water connection, that there is a physical separation (air gap) between the two systems. The only protection at this point is the requirement for a backflow preventer; however the question is the overall effectiveness of this method and feel for overall water safety that the two systems should not be interconnected. Council was asked to set a public hearing for the November City Council meeting if they wish to consider the ordinance. Councilwoman Plichta motioned to set a public hearing for the ordinance revision for the November meeting.

Councilman Garner seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea, Councilman Garner -yea, Councilwoman Plichta-yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse - yea, Councilman Lazo - yea.

Ms. Bonnie Harmon of Kenbrook Drive appeared before council to ask what had been done in regards to recent flood damage her house received following a recent storm. A basement wall in her house collapsed due to an extensive amount of flood water. She had asked that council take action to keep this from happening again. Council has tasked city staff to research the problem and return any finding to them at a later council meeting.

Keith Barker provided an update on the storm water system review that Council had asked staff to begin at the September City Council meeting. He stated he has met with the City Engineer and Public Works Director to develop a plan of action in regards to this issue. The City Engineer is soliciting information from the regional airport and water treatment plant so that staff can have an accurate idea of the rainfall event that triggered the high water throughout the City. He is also comparing this information to rainfall events over the past number of years and our annual rainfall totals to see how this compares in relation. Public Works was directed to assess the current system of ditches and pipes in place along Fries Road and Kenbrook Drive; both to look for any possible blockages in the ditch lines and pipes and to assess if any ditches can be diverted to another possible outlet or drainage area. He has also asked Kevin Heath of Adams Heath Engineering to also assist in an assessment of this area, both to determine if the storm water system that is in place met/meets VDOT standards for a typical rainfall event and what type of system might be required for the larger type events on September 5&6. He asked City Council to hold this item on the agenda for the November City Council meeting.

Council set this date as the public hearing date for the Use of Community Development Block Funding. This public hearing was required as part of the DHCD grant to apply for the Bottom Area Project. The intended use of grant funds will be for infrastructure improvements, low to moderate income housing improvements, and commercial storefront improvements. The overall funding being sought at this time is approximately \$1.4MM from DHCD. Keith Barker noted that staff may seek to supplement that funding with additional funding with program income from the former North Central Housing Project, VDOT Transportation Enhancement Projects, and other sources not yet identified. Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comment. After hearing none he declared the public hearing closed. No action was required from Council.

Dennis Lennert was introduced as the new director of the GDA and presented a request that the City Council approve a road closure from 5pm to 8pm on Monday October 31 for the annual Halloween Festivities. Streets to be closed are Main Street from Washington St. to Oldtown Street; and Grayson St. between Jefferson St and Rex Lane. The road closure is expected to begin at 3:00. Vice Mayor Greene motioned to approve the road closure request. Councilman Webb seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea, Councilman Garner -yea, Councilwoman Plichta-yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse - yea, Councilman Lazo - yea.

Keith Barker requested November 14 as the beginning date for fall leaf cleanup this year. This follows the same dates council set last year and should allow sufficient time to have the majority of all leaves collected prior to Thanksgiving. Advertisements, as well as postings on the community channel, will be made. Any additional leaf and brush will be picked up after Thanksgiving. Councilwoman Plichta motioned to set November 14 as the beginning date for fall leaf cleanup.

Vice-Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea, Councilman Garner –yea, Councilwoman Plichta-yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea.

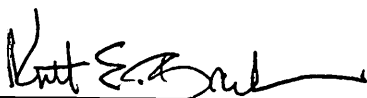
Keith Barker confirmed with City Council that staff will use the same program for snow removal in the downtown area as last year. Due to the heavy snows the city experienced this past two years and the number of pieces of equipment that are used for snow removal, staff is limited in how fast they could remove snow from certain areas in the downtown area. The city has an agreement in place with a contractor that has the ability to load and haul snow. The plan at this time is that public works will push snow to the center of the streets as in the past and then the contractor will load and haul the snow from Main, Oldtown, Grayson and Center Streets. Mr. Barker reminded council that staff will reserve judgment as to whether snow will be removed during the day or night. The contractor does not carry a VDOT contract so this allows him to respond to us relatively quick. No action was required from Council.

Keith Barker updated council on the \$200,000 grant that was applied for and \$200,000 loan through USDA and the stimulus funding last year in order to replace a fire truck. The city was only awarded \$25,000 in the grant and approved for a \$400,000 loan. Since that time, the GFD has been awarded a grant from FEMA to replace the humvee that was damaged in an accident previously. Chief Hankley has been in discussions with USDA and they have agreed to reallocate the \$25,000 to equipment that can be installed on the new truck if council agrees. The GFD has been working through a series of discussions and long range planning and feel that this option better meets the needs of the department at this time rather than the purchase a newer ladder truck. Council was requested to approve the change the scope of the grant from a truck purchase to an equipment purchase. Councilman Garner motioned to approve the change. Councilman Webb seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea, Councilman Garner –yea, Councilwoman Plichta-yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea.

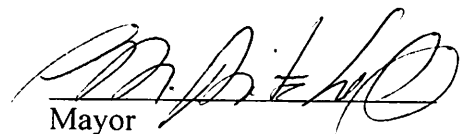
Keith Barker made City Council aware that Galax was one of four communities awarded funding in Virginia through the COPS Grant. This funding will provide salary and benefits for a new police officer for three years. This grant was applied for with the intent of hiring a bilingual police officer. Advertising for the position has begun. No action is required from Council.

At 8:05 p.m., a motion was made by Vice Mayor Greene to enter into closed session under **Business and Industry Development, §2.2-3711 A.5 of the Code of Virginia** - Prospective or expansion of business or industry where no previous public announcement has been made. Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion.

At 8:22 p.m. Council reconvened in open session. Mayor Mitchell certified that no items other than those allowed under the cited Virginia Code section were discussed and no action taken, with the following affirmation: Mayor Mitchell-yea, Vice-Mayor Greene-yea, Councilman Garner –yea, Councilwoman Plichta-yea, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea.



Clerk



Mayor