

Galax City Council

Minutes

October 12, 2015

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on October 12, 2015 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: Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Greene, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, Councilman Lazo, and Councilman Davis.

Special recognition was given by Mayor Mitchell to Allen Taylor who retired from Galax Public Works on August 28, 2015. Mayor Mitchell along with Council recognized Mr. Taylor for his dedicated service to the City from April 6, 1998 to August 28, 2015 (17+ years).

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

Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on September 14, 2015. Councilwoman Crouse seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Mayor Mitchell announced that this was the date advertised for consideration of a budget amendment to our FY2016 Galax City Budget. Finance Director, Judy Taylor-Gallimore addressed each item on the proposed amendment with Council. Keith Barker noted that if the overall amendment was more than 1% of our current budget, a public hearing was required. Mayor Mitchell opened the Public Hearing by asking if there were any public comments. After no public comments were made, Mayor Mitchell declared the Public Hearing closed. Vice Mayor Greene made the motion to approve the FY2016 budget amendment. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Mayor Mitchell welcomed Laura Romanowski, Executive Director of The Arts Council of the Twin Counties. Ms. Romanowski was in attendance to speak about a new "Friends of the Rex" campaign to replace the seats in the Rex Theater. She explained that the goal was to replace all the main floor seats with new seats, and seek sponsors in a cost per seat campaign. She said there would be a plaque in the Rex lobby with name plates of the donors. Ms. Romanowski noted the estimated cost to replace the main floor seats would be \$40,000+ and they were designed to last for many decades.

Galax Police Chief, Rick Clark was present to address Council regarding the "In God We Trust" Project. Chief Clark explained that the City had been approached concerning the project whose purpose was to encourage localities to put "In God We Trust" on their police cars and in the public buildings. Chief Clark said that there was also a resolution for Council's consideration relating to the project. Keith Barker informed Council that he spoke with our City Attorney who felt that there was no prohibition against displaying "In God We Trust" since it was predominantly displayed on our currency, in federal buildings, etc. Councilman Lazo asked who the founders of the project were. Chief Clark explained that In God We Trust – America, Inc. was a non-profit organization for the purpose of spreading the mission of patriotism across America.

Councilman Garner commented that he did not agree with passing the resolution. His reasons included biblical theology, he felt it was politically charged, and it combined church & state. Vice Mayor Greene commented that he believed the City should be able to put the statement on their property without having to go through an organization or signing a resolution. However, he said that he did ultimately agree with the project. Councilwoman Plichta, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilman Davis and Mayor Mitchell, each made positive comments in favor of the project. Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the "In God We Trust" Resolution. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea. Councilman Garner and Councilman Lazo voted nay.

Mayor Mitchell reminded Council of the invitation to the annual BRCEDA, Annual Regional Economic Development Briefing. He said that Mike Lehmkuhler, VEDP, would be the keynote speaker.

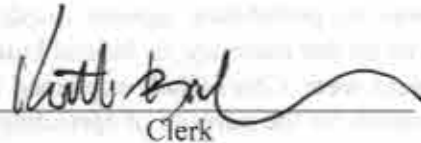
Mayor Mitchell informed Council of a Mount Rogers Community Services Board appointment vacancy. He explained that Robert Kirby has resigned his seat which represented Galax on the (MRCSB) due to a change of employment. Keith Barker said that he had spoken with Lisa Moore who informed him that the remaining term of Mr. Kirby would expire December 31, 2017. Councilwoman Plichta noted that she was interested in filling the vacancy. Councilman Garner made the motion to appoint Councilwoman Plichta. 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 Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker addressed Council regarding a request from Rooftop that would allow them to have more trash cans than were permitted by our sanitation ordinance. He explained due to their landlocked situation, they were unable to have a dumpster located on their property. He said a food program they were operating was generating more waste than they could dispose of. Mr. Barker said that he had spoken to Charlie Joyce, Public Works Director, and we felt we could handle their request for additional removal, but the ordinance restricted us by volume. He told Council if they chose to consider their request, we could look to amend our ordinance for additional cans or could handle this as an administrative item within the City Manager's office. He said any additional charges would be based on the current per container rate schedule. Councilman Garner made the motion to allow the City Manager to handle the request administratively. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Councilwoman Plichta commended Shannon Watkins from the Gazette on the article she wrote on the Bottom Project and suggested to Council that the name of the "Bottom Area" be changed at some point to "Village on Meadow." Keith Barker said that it could be discussed at the next building project meeting. Councilwoman Plichta also suggested a hiking & biking trail along Chestnut Creek to the Music Center.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:35 p.m.

  
Mayor

  
Clerk