

Galax City Council  
Minutes  
June 8, 2015

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on June 8, 2015 at 7:30 pm.

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

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

Sgt. Jacob Vaughan from the Galax Police Department was present to introduce his K-9 partner, Ajo (eye-o). Ajo has been trained in drug detection, tracking and officer protection.

Vice Mayor Greene then introduced and recognized Matthew LaRaviere and his family by reading aloud a resolution. The LaRaviere family assisted the Galax Police Department to obtain a trained police dog by conducting an auction sale that raised over \$10,000 towards the purchase. Council and everyone present applauded the LaRaviere's generosity.

Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on May 26, 2015. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

City Manager, Keith Barker, presented and read aloud the details of the proposed FY16 Galax City Budget. Mr. Barker then asked Council for approval of the budget as presented. Councilman Garner made the motion to approve the FY16 Galax City Budget. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

- General Fund Budget (including DSS) - \$17,948,371
- Utility Fund Budget - \$ 2,620,090

Proposed tax rates represent no change in our current rates and remain at:

- Real Estate - \$0.73 per \$100 (5.8% increase)
- Personal Property - \$2.25 per \$100 (no change)
- Machinery & Tools - \$1.50 per \$100 (no change)

Ray Kohl, Tourism Director gave Council an update on Galax Visitor's Center & Tourism. Mr. Kohl informed Council that the Galax Visitor's Center has had visitors from 47 countries and 48 states. He also said that motorcycle tourism was now a big attraction in this area. Mr. Kohl also gave updates in the areas of bus tours, the Farmer's Market, and the Rex Theater.

Mr. Barker explained that there were citizens interested in some of the open board appointments. The open positions are listed as well as the votes:

- Planning Commission, 3 appointments – Ron Catron, Dr. Jim Adams, Cathy Parks  
Each term - four (4) years (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2019). Councilman Garner made the motion to re-appoint Ron Catron, Dr. Jim Adams, Cathy Parks to the Planning Commission. Councilman Lazo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.
- Parks & Recreation, 2 appointments and a Council rep – William Suite and Curly Sellers  
Each term - two years (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017). Mr. Barker said that Council needed to appoint a Council representative to this board also. Councilwoman Plichta volunteered to serve on the Parks & Rec. Board. Councilman Garner made the motion to appoint Mr. Suite and Ms. Sellers to the Parks & Rec. Board as well as approve Councilwoman Plichta to serve as Council representative. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.
- IDA, 2 appointments– Curly Sellers, no other letters – Each term - 4 years (July 1, 2015 June 30, 2019). Councilman Garner made the motion to appoint Ms. Sellers to the IDA Board. Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.
- Library Board, 1 appointment – Mary Elizabeth Whartenby – Each term - 4 years (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2019). Councilman Garner made the motion to appoint Ms. Whartenby to the Library Board. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker addressed Council regarding the Public Art Funds. Mr. Barker said that Council held over the request from the last City Council meeting on May 26, 2015. At that meeting, Chris Pollins - CCSA Director, requested for the newly formed Arts Committee to receive and hold the Public Art Funds through CCSA. Ray Kohl, Tourism Director, noted that the funds left in that account may go toward a bench project for the down town area. Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the request. Councilman Garner seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Judy Taylor-Gallimore, Director of Finance, presented to Council an FY2015 Budget Amendment for consideration. It was noted that since this was less than 1% of the budget, a public hearing was not required. Ms. Taylor-Gallimore explained that the intent of the amendment was to recognize additional revenue and expenditures prior to the close of the fiscal year. Councilman Garner made the motion to accept the budget amendment as presented. Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker informed Council that a request had been made from Crossroads Institute regarding the SREC funds (\$17,205.08) that were returned to each member locality. Mr. Barker said that Crossroads had requested that Galax, Carroll and Grayson permit those funds to be turned over to Crossroads. Mr. Barker noted that he had spoken to Dr. McBride, Executive Director, who felt there were some capital improvements that could be addressed and the funds would not be used for reoccurring operational expenses.

Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to approve the request to turn over the SREC funds to Crossroads. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker addressed Council about the need to upgrade our wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and three (3) pump stations that serve the City. Mr. Barker explained that Engineering Dept. staff have been working with a consultant to develop a Preliminary Engineering Review that has an estimate to renovate the WWTP at \$6,000,000. The estimate to renovate the B.C. Vaughan Pump Station would be approximately \$750,000. Mr. Barker said that the estimate for the other two (2) smaller pumps stations at \$1,250,000, for a \$2,000,000 total. He said that it was believed that there was approximately \$1,000,000 in additional sewer system work that may need to be done as part of these projects. Total projected costs were \$9,000,000. Mr. Barker further explained that he along with engineering staff participated in a conference call with representatives of DEQ to discuss possible loan applications and principle forgiveness. He said that the DEQ staff, and our engineering consultant, have recommended we submit for their next loan pool, which would be due by July 15. He said that we wouldn't see a loan approval until December 2015 and no loans would close until bids were received approximately 12 months later. He explained that you do not start repaying the loans until 6 months after construction, which was anticipated at 18 months. Rates would have to be adjusted prior to repayment as needed to make sure the water/sewer fund would be self-supporting. The following is the timeline given to Council:

FY2016	July 2015 December 2015 March 2016	- Submit the DEQ Loan Application - Receive approval for loan and loan rate (0% - 1.5%) - Find out principle forgiveness
FY2017	July/Aug 2016	- Procure Engineer(s)
FY 2018	July 2017 Aug/Sept 2017 October 2017	- Complete design and bid project - Close loan, award construction contract(s) - Begin Construction (18 months)
FY2019	March 2019	- Construction Complete
FY2020	October 2019	- 1 <sup>st</sup> Payment Due

Mr. Barker explained that water/sewer rates would need to be addressed prior to the beginning of FY2020. He said, however, they could be addressed in a stepped basis over multiple years if needed. He also noted that DEQ does review all rates and audits to verify the financial stability of the water/sewer fund. Mr. Barker closed by asking for Council's permission for the opportunity to submit an application to DEQ by July 15. He said that it does not commit the City to a loan, but lets us see what interest rate we could reasonably expect, in addition to seeing if there were any principle forgiveness from DEQ. Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to authorize the City Manager to submit the DEQ application and necessary paperwork for the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund. Councilman Lazo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker addressed Council regarding the bids that were received for the Harold Snead Public Safety Building renovation on May 28. Mr. Barker told Council that the the low bid received was \$762,800 which included a second floor heat pump replacement of \$14,200 which we will pay for out of FY2016 building maintenance funds. He said this would leave a project cost at \$748,600.

He said that we have met with the contractor and architect and revised some equipment, removed some items from the project, would install data and telephone wiring with our own staff, and have worked to sequence the project so it would assist the contractor. He explained that with these changes we have been able to reduce the bid project cost to \$657,700. He said that funds borrowed for the project were \$600,000 for construction, however we borrowed an additional \$100,000 towards an unspecified "Downtown Venue" with the thought that if one of the three projects we borrowed funds for exceeded their architect's estimate we could use these funds as a contingency line item. The Juvenile Probation Office and Veterans Memorial Projects are both within budget and do not need additional funds. Mr. Barker closed by informing Council that with the need to move the Downtown Venue funds to this project, he would ask City Council to amend the project budget to include those funds. Any funds remaining from the Harold Snead Public Safety Building Renovations would be reallocated to a downtown improvement project for Council consideration and approval once this project is complete. Councilman Davis made the motion to amend the project budget to include the funds borrowed for the Downtown Venue Project. Councilman Lazo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Brenda Marrah presented information to Council regarding a HEAL resolution which is a grant opportunity from the HEAL Cities and Town Campaign. Ms. Marrah requested Council to adopt the resolution so we could apply for a \$5000 grant with the organization. She said that the intent was to:

- A. When possible with funding, begin to develop priorities and development plans for sidewalks and bike lanes in underserved neighborhoods.
- B. Seek funding to promote use of connected walkway by seniors, families, and people with disabilities by installing benches.
- C. As feasible, create signage identifying critically needed citizen services and public buildings and walking maps to the services.

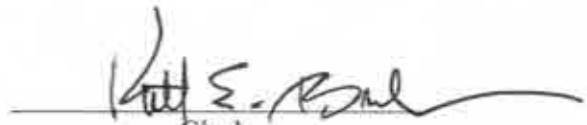
Ms. Marrah said by that it was our intent to apply for the grant and use the Public Art funds for benches (Item B) as a match and ask the grant agency to fund Item C. She said that our vision for Item C was a downtown wayfarer sign and brochures/maps. Ms. Marrah closed by saying that while we would locate critical public services on the sign, we would also include downtown businesses and services. Councilman Lazo made the motion to approve the adoption of the HEAL Resolution. Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker informed Council that a letter from District III had been received regarding bus parking on Rex Lane. He said that Council took action a few years ago to designate bus parking in front of the District III offices on Rex Lane to accommodate loading and unloading of passengers. Mr. Barker said that with changes to their bus routes and the relocation of the terminal parking, that bus parking was no longer needed. Mr. Barker asked Council to consider changing this parking back from bus parking to four hour vehicle parking. This would provide 3 additional parking spaces along this area. Mr. Barker also asked Council to consider designating the two spaces in front of the Municipal Building to 15 minute parking from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM M-F for customers in the Municipal Building. He added that it was felt that this would provide easier access for our customers to conduct their business and in the event of a bus tour or other need that could be coordinated with the Municipal Building or Police Department who could cover the signs for those temporary situations. Councilman Garner made the motion to change the parking in the two locations described. Councilman Davis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, Councilman Lazo – yea, and Councilman Davis – yea.

Keith Barker explained to Council that the City has been working with The Lane Group on the Rt. 58/ Reserve Blvd Safety Improvement project and was nearing the final design information for VDOT review. He said that part of the project was to remove the mature pine trees along the route due to age and shading issues. The intent was to plant trees of a different species back that will not grow quite as high. Mr. Barker added that in order to control costs, our engineer had recommended that we separate the project and allow the tree removal to be performed by logging companies rather than a highway contractor. Those bids were being secured at this time. He said that it was possible we could see that portion of the project begin in July with completion of less than four (4) months. He closed by saying that the final designs would be sent to VDOT and the remainder of the project would be bid. He also said that we had asked the engineer to expedite the replanting of trees in that portion of the project.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:40 p.m.

  
Vice Mayor

  
Clerk

