

GALAX CITY COUNCIL

Meeting
January 09, 2006
Minutes

The Galax City Council convened in the courtroom of WHS Public Safety Building on January 09, 2006 at 7:30pm. The meeting was called to order by the mayor with the following councilpersons being present and they are as listed: Robert Lazo, Robert Kirby, Sharon Plichta, C. M. Mitchell, and Willie Greene. George Valdez and Helen Kyle were absent from the meeting.

Councilman Kirby opened the meeting with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Councilwoman Plichta motioned to approve the minutes as written and to dispense with their reading. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

This date and time had been duly advertised for a joint public hearing with the Planning Commission. Planning Commission members present are as listed: Ron Catron, Roger Martin, Anne Vaughan, Allan Funk and Sharon Plichta. Planning Commission members absent were Jim Adams and Ruth Hall.

Mr. ~~Catron~~^{tr} stated that the purpose of the hearing was to receive public comments related to changing the zoning of the property at 205 Cranberry Road from R-2 to B-2. This request was made by Tim Bullins, property owner.

No comments were heard and the hearing was closed. The Planning Commission will meet on January 11, 2006 to develop a recommendation concerning the change.

City Attorney Jim Cornwell addressed Council with information relating to a proposed rescue mission on Main Street. He advised that according to his research, it is his legal opinion that a soup kitchen and homeless housing is not permitted in a B-2 zoned building on Main Street. He also stated that the zoning administrator concurs with his findings.

Jeff Evans director of the proposed rescue mission had asked to be on the agenda for this meeting. He discussed how he is being led by God to open a rescue mission in the Alderman Building on Main Street and how he lives in a democracy. He's very frustrated because his ideas have been met with resistance from citizens, downtown business owners and merchants. His characterizations of city administration, the downtown merchants, local citizens and the downtown area were of a very negative nature.

Mayor Mitchell took exception to his comments.

Councilman Lazo asked Mr. Evans to explain what his plans are for the Alderman Building. Mr. Evans answered that there would be preaching services every night and that the people needing to be helped would just come.

Councilwoman Plichta stated that there are many Christians in Galax with a big heart to help the down and out and who would support his concept but that the location just isn't suited for his endeavors.

Mr. Evans stated that there will be no impact on the City from the planned mission.

Councilwoman Plichta questioned what the residents would do during the day and who the staff would be. He replied that as of now, there is no staff and that he has applied for the non-profit exemption.

Mrs. Plichta asked Mr. Evans if he would consider another area. He stated that if he could find a suitable location he would.

Mayor Mitchell asked Mr. Evans what the maximum number of residents would be. Mr. Evans stated that he didn't know.

Mr. Mitchell advised that tonight's meeting is not a public hearing on the proposed shelter and asked that those who wish to address Council keep their comments to five minutes each.

Mr. Evans advised that Landmark Baptist Church is not a sponsoring agent of his proposed mission.

Councilman Greene requested that no speaker make derogatory comments.

Wayne Chappell, 307 West Center Street, stated why he is against the mission being on Main Street and asked that all energies be directed toward building up the downtown, not tearing it down. He also stated that his family, in downtown Galax, has helped the less fortunate since 1937.

Steve Hooks stated that he and his wife moved here because of the music and the downtown area. He believes the mission would be too close to the skate park, schools, and the recreation center. He believes it would be an invitation to bring trouble downtown; and, he stated that the downtown is not a skid row.

Pam Carpenter from Grayson County stated that she is appalled that the downtown doesn't want the mission on Main Street.

Tommy Dodson stated that the mission will be a big burden on the Police Department. He stated that the police department has worked hard to make Galax a great city and that anybody in the room tonight would help the down and out. He also questioned the supervision issue.

Tommy Nichols from Mt. Airy advised that he believes we should help people to do better. He says that there are a lot of those people already here and we need to help them get off the street.

Tony Goodman stated that he believes the mission is a noble vision but the location for it is wrong. He commented on the vitalized downtown saying it is a great place to shop and eat. He isn't against the mission but it needs to be put in a different location.

Brian Thomas commented that he came from an area that has a shelter. With the close proximity to the schools he does not believe it will allow for the protection of kids that they need.

Bob Welsh stated that it is an admirable idea but with the concerns of what will go on inside and outside of the building he believes they should find a better place. It should not be on Main Street.

Odell Hamden introduced himself as a business owner for over thirty years and is now retired. If he were from out of town and came through town and saw a mission on Main Street he would accelerate to get through town as fast as he could. People do not oppose a mission only its location. He implored Council to be proactive.

Judy White, 203 Lafayette Street, said she doesn't believe homelessness is a problem in Galax and questioned where the men would be coming from.

Councilman Lazo questioned as to where the residents would be coming from.

Mr. Evans responded that the shelter would be open to everyone especially the people already here. He also stated that he would be the director with a five-member board.

Erin Reidhammer commented that there weren't many answers to a lot of questions. She also discussed how the downtown merchants would be willing to help the residents if they were housed in an area where they could be productive and sell their products.

Mr. Evans again replied that the homeless people are on the street now. That he is concerned about democracy.

Derrick Davis presented a signed petition asking that the mission be located somewhere else. He commented that the residents who live in the same block do not want a mission. He also expressed his concerns for the safety of his five-year-old child and other potential harm that can come to the city.

Rita Davis, a city resident, stated that the downtown is not dying and she isn't aware of street people. She doesn't believe there is a local need for a rescue mission.

Mayor Mitchell advised that there is no action to be taken by Council tonight. He stated that all the comments heard were purely informational and that Council works strictly by the law.

Following discussion of a VDOT Revenue Sharing Agreement which is a 50/50 matching grant from VDOT, Councilwoman Plichta motioned to approve the agreement and that the City Manager be authorized to execute the agreement. Councilman Greene offered a second to the motion and it was unanimously approved.

City Manager Campbell requested that Council approve a resolution, which approves the issuance of bonds by the IDA to benefit Turman Hardwood Flooring. Councilman Greene motioned to approve the resolution. Councilman Kirby seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. A discussion ensued. Councilman Greene amended his motion to approve the **Resolution Approving the Issuance of Bonds by the Industrial Development Authority of the City of Galax, Virginia, for the Benefit of Turman Hardwood Flooring, Inc.** Councilman Kirby amended his second and the resolution was unanimously approved.

Edwin Ward, City Engineer, discussed the purchase and installation of a belt press for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. City Manager Campbell noted that the purchase agreement with BDP Industries specifies a cost of \$142,500 and that funds for this acquisition had been budgeted over the past two years. Councilwoman Plichta motioned to approve said purchase agreement and installation of the equipment. Councilman Greene seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

City Manager Campbell advised that last year's audit is ready for review and it was distributed at tonight's meeting.

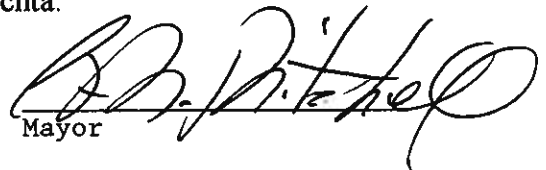
Council chose February 2 as its meeting date with the Galax City School Board.

City Manager Campbell advised that the City had received \$200,000.00 in ARC Grant funding which should be enough to begin Phase I of the Chestnut Creek School project.

Derrick Davis asked Mr. Barker for information on renovating the second story of his building on Main Street. Mr. Barker advised.

Councilman Lazo stated that he hopes Mr. Evans can find a way to fulfill his dream of opening a rescue mission somewhere.

With no further business to come before Council, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:30pm on a motion by Councilwoman Plichta.


Mayor


Clerk