

Galax City Council

Minutes

May 12, 2014

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on May 12, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

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, Councilman Webb, Councilwoman Crouse, Councilwoman Plichta, and Councilman Lazo.

Mayor Mitchell prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman Webb made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on April 28, 2014. Councilwoman Crouse seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilman Webb – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Lazo – yea.

This was the date and time advertised for a public hearing to receive comments on the following zoning requests:

The Galax Elks Lodge #2212 requested their property located on Larkspur Lane (Tax Parcel 37-103,104,105,106,107) be rezoned from B-2 General Business to R-1 Single Family Residential per a proffer offered on a previous rezoning application. The Galax Planning Commission met on April 30th to consider this request. Keith Barker explained to Council that the Elks Lodge request was made in agreement with their proffer offered at their original rezoning from R-1 to B-2. He said they agreed if the sale of their property did not go through, they would request that the property revert back to the R-1 designation. The Planning Commission has made the recommendation to approve the rezoning from B-2 to R-1. Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comment. After no comments were made, Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed. Councilwoman Plichta made the motion to accept the zoning change for The Galax Elks Lodge from B-2 General Business to R-1 Single Family Residential. Councilwoman Crouse seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilman Webb – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Lazo – yea.

Jurgen Epple requested a conditional use permit to construct two (2) apartments above his property at 117 E. Grayson Street (Tax Parcel 55-132). The Galax Planning Commission met on April 30th to consider this request. Mr. Barker told Council that this is permitted under Section 160-93.A. The Planning Commission made the recommendation to approve the conditional use permit for Mr. Epple as requested. Mayor Mitchell opened the floor for public comment. After no comments were made, Mayor Mitchell declared the public hearing closed. Councilman Webb made the motion to approve the conditional use permit. Councilwoman Crouse seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilman Webb – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Lazo – yea.

Linda Mock, Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator, was present to give Council an update on activities she has been working on as part of the Galax SRTS program. She was also seeking the approval of a resolution recognizing May as National Bike Month. Vice Mayor Greene made the motion to approve the requested resolution. Councilman Webb seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilman Webb – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Lazo – yea.

Mr. McFadyen – BRCEDA, was present to discuss a regional enterprise zone application that would include Wildwood, but he noted that it would have some implications for our current enterprise zone in Galax. He explained that this year, Carroll County is submitting an application to renew its Enterprise Zone (EZ), which includes Wildwood. Also, that the state EZ incentives for Wildwood were critically important to our ability to market the site. Mr. McFadyen also said that Grayson County is seeking to establish an EZ. He said that this year, DHCD will designate five (5) EZs across Virginia and there is a very low probability that both Carroll and Grayson would receive individual designations. However, DHCD encouraged our region to consider a regional EZ application, which would need to include Carroll, Galax, and Grayson. He also noted that Galax's current EZ does not expire until 2017. By submitting a regional EZ application this year does not jeopardize Galax's existing EZ and makes Carroll's and Grayson's application more competitive. Should DHCD designate our localities as a regional EZ, Galax would need to designate additional zones and keep its existing zones (essentially doubling the available acreage that Galax can have in targeted zones for a two-year period). The Mount Rogers PDC is working on preparing proposed regional EZ maps that would show where Galax's additional zones could be located in keeping with the DHCD requirements for regional EZs. Mr. McFadyen explained that an application to the state will be due by June 30. Keith Barker told Council that we had not received maps showing the proposed Enterprise Zones, so it was agreed upon after discussion that this item will be held over to an upcoming Council meeting.

Keith Barker announced to Council that we have received a notice from the State Corporation Commission (SCC) regarding a natural gas franchise request from Appalachian Natural Gas Corporation (APNG). Mr. Barker explained that he met with representatives of the company in late February about the possibility of service in our area, he noted that however, we have had limited follow-up conversations. He said that he has spoken to our City Attorney regarding the comment period (until June 10, 2014) and options we have to make sure any company proposing to provide service in Galax follows through with the project. Mr. Barker noted that while we believe natural gas in our area would be a benefit to industries, businesses and citizens, we also want to have confidence in the request and that work would be performed in a timely manner. Mr. Barker said that he has asked our City Attorney to file a request to appear at the SCC meeting. This would permit us to seek additional information from the company and bring back a recommendation in regards to our support of this application. Mr. Barker said that he would keep Council informed.

Keith Barker told Council as discussed in the FY2015 Budget Meetings, we have been working with VML/VACO to solicit possible loans for capital improvement projects at our Police Department/Courts facility, completion of the Veterans Memorial, and renovation of the former Health Department. He said that it appeared that we may be able to close on a loan in early July; however VML/VACO asked that Council consider adopting a resolution which was presented to Council earlier. Mr. Barker said that this will give an official act by Council so VML/VACO could approach lending institutions for quotes on a loan. He noted this would not obligate Council to take on the loan debt but would allow us to move to the next step in the process.

Councilman Webb made the motion to adopt the resolution as presented. Councilwoman Plichta seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes: Mayor Mitchell – yea, Vice Mayor Greene – yea, Councilman Garner – yea, Councilman Webb – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Lazo – yea.

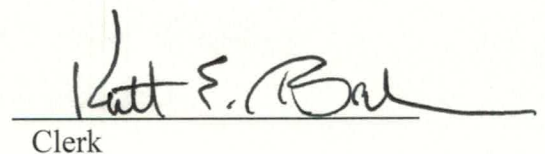
Mayor Mitchell announced that Council has been asked to set the public hearing for May 27, 2014 at 7:30 PM for the FY2015 budget. As proposed there will be no increases in the tax or utility rates for FY2015. Keith Barker added that we have been working to provide a final budget that also will include the VML/VACO loan. Councilwoman Crouse made the motion for the date of May 27th to be the date for a Public Hearing for the FY2015 budget. 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, Councilman Webb – yea, Councilwoman Crouse – yea, Councilwoman Plichta – yea, and Councilman Lazo – yea.

Keith Barker announced to Council that he received information from Russell Byrd/Comcast on April 28, 2014 informing us that because Comcast had successfully purchased Time Warner, they must divest themselves of smaller markets in order to remain below a specified market share. Mr. Barker said that they will be divesting themselves of the Galax market with this change. He noted that the new provider for Galax will be called SpinCo and will be owned by New Charter, a reorganization of Charter Communications. He also told Council that the official actions will take a few months to complete and that to his knowledge there was no official action for Council to take. He said that this was presented as information only.

HEARING OF VISITORS: Mr. Eddie Einhorn briefly addressed Council regarding the building that he owns on North Main Street across from Macado's. This building previously housed Wachovia. He stated that he is trying to decide what to do with the building that would be beneficial to Galax.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:20 p.m.


Mayor


Clerk

