

Galax City Council  
Minutes  
April 12, 2021

Galax City Council convened in regular session on April 12, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

At 4:00 p.m. Mayor Greene called the meeting to order with the following Council persons present and they are as listed: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor Mitchell at 4:05 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia:

**Personnel Matter – School Board Appointments § 2.2-3711 A.1 of the Code of Virginia -**  
Candidates for employment; the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, discipline, salaries, compensation, or resignation of employees.

Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

At 6:00 p.m. Council reconvened in open session. Mayor Greene certified that no items other than those allowed under the cited Virginia code section were discussed and no action was taken, with the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

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

In special action, Mayor Greene recognized the following employees for their upcoming retirements:

- Kyle O. Bowers, Public Works, May 1, 1981 – April 30, 2021 (40 Years)
- Robert S. (Steve) Hazelwood, Golf Course, March 1, 2006 – April 30, 2021 (15 Years, 2 Months)

Mayor Greene read aloud a proclamation recognizing Medical Laboratory Professionals Week. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the proclamation. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Councilwoman White made the motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 8, 2021. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the minutes of the called meeting of March 22, 2021. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the

following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene announced this was the date advertised for the public hearing concerning the Galax Schools Budget for FY2022. He opened the floor for public comments. Ms. Susan Tilley, Galax Schools Superintendent was present to discuss the budget along with some additional school updates. She thanked Council for their support and spoke on the process to get the budget finalized. The main components of the budget consisted of compensation, staffing, and resources. She said the School Board had approved the advertised budget, and the Mayor and City Manager met with the school reps to discuss the budget. Keith Barker added there was a request for an additional \$114,000 in local funds to help fund a FT Middle School Nurse, School Social Worker, and additional bus drivers. Ms. Tilley was very appreciative for the additional funding. With no additional public comments, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed.

Mayor Greene announced this was the date advertised to consider an ordinance that would allow Galax to participate in the newly formed Mt. Rogers Cigarette Tax Board. Mayor Greene opened the floor for comments. Keith Barker informed Council this ordinance would not set a cigarette tax, but would permit Galax to be a member of this organization that may include the counties of Grayson, Carroll, Bland, Wythe, Smyth, and Washington. He said there were a number of towns included in the membership also. He said the concept was that a regional board would be run by MRPDC with collection and distribution of revenues by the same board. All member jurisdictions were in the process of having public hearings on joining the board. Mr. Barker said if Council approved the ordinance, he asked that May 10 be set as the public hearing date for a cigarette tax ordinance. With no further public comments, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the ordinance to establish and join the Mt. Rogers Cigarette Tax Board. Vice Mayor Mitchell seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to set May 10 as the public hearing date for a cigarette tax ordinance. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene welcomed Ms. Mary Ellen Vaught from Friends of the Shelter. Ms. Vaught was present to speak about the Galax Carroll Grayson Animal Shelter construction project and made a request for additional funding to complete the north addition interior work. She explained that each locality the shelter serves, Galax, Carroll, and Grayson were being asked to commit 25K each so that project could be completed. Keith Barker spoke briefly to say that both Carroll and Grayson had agreed to committing the funds either this fiscal year or next. Council thanked Ms. Vaught for her hard work, dedication and leadership in raising 107K, which represented donations from the area citizens, for the shelter project. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the 25K request for the shelter project. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker made a request of Council to approve three FY21 budget amendments which included:

- Twin County Community Foundation – We applied for and received \$2,300 in funding from the TCCF for additional cleaning supplies related to Covid.  
Revenue 10.3.3180.0167 - Twin County Community Foundation \$2,300  
Expenditure 10.4.9950.1569 - Twin County Community Foundation Grant \$2,300
- MRPDC Swanson St. Stormwater Grant – Staff contacted MRPDC to request any additional funds that may help in the stormwater/utility design of the Swanson St. Stormwater Project. MRPDC offered funding in the amount of \$8,750 towards utility design on this upcoming project.  
Revenue 50.3.3180.0104 - MRPDC Grants \$8,750  
Expenditure 50.4.9950.1815 - Swanson St. Stormwater Project \$8,750
- MRPDC Fair St. Sewer Grant – Staff contacted the MRPDC concerning any funds that could be used to offset sewer line work that was required as part of the Galax Carroll Grayson Animal Shelter Project. MRPDC offered a grant in the amount of \$6,626 for the sewer line relocation.  
Revenue 50.3.3180.0104 - MRPDC Grants \$6,626  
Expenditure 50.4.9950.1814 - Fair St. Sewer Project \$6,626

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the three requested budget amendments. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Ms. Chris Pollins, CCSA Director, was present and gave an update on CCSA. Some of the items discussed included: Public Art, gift shop sales – which included the sale of a chair for \$2,700. Ms. Pollins also spoke about classes and thanked Council for their continued support. Councilwoman Ritchie discussed Public Art projects which included: A mural on Grayson Street, covering the power boxes with wraps, the columns at Felt Park, replacing the foot prints downtown with something to honor musicians in our area.

Keith Barker informed Council of recent legislation (SB 1157) which now would require all May elections to move to November, beginning January 2022. He said if Council took no action, current council members up for election in May 2022 would have extended terms until December 31, 2022 with a November 2022 election. He said there was concern among some VML members that this would mix local elections in with national elections that occur on even numbered years. He said moving elections to an odd year cycle would put local elections on the same schedule as state elections. Mr. Barker further explained that some communities were considering changing their election cycle to an odd year election per Code of Virginia 24.2-222.1(D), however that would shorten current Council members terms and would require quick action on behalf of Council. He said the issue in moving elections was that individuals would have to register to run for a seat by June 8, so an ordinance recognizing the change would need to be heard and approved on May 10. He said there was no requirement to move to an odd year election cycle. Vice Mayor Mitchell commented if our elections were on the rotation with federal elections, council elections get lost. Councilman Larrowe said he felt we should stay away from the federal elections if possible. Councilwoman White made the motion to hold a public hearing on May 10<sup>th</sup> on the proposed ordinance recognizing the election change. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell,

Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker made a request of Council to set May 10, 2021 as the date for the public hearing concerning the FY2022 budget. He said the budget as drafted had no new taxes or fees with the exception of the proposed cigarette tax. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the request. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Mayor Greene announced there were a number of board appointments that Council needed to consider before June 30. Keith Barker added that some individuals had expressed an interest in being reappointed while other seats must have a new appointee due to the limit on terms.

- Wytheville Community College – *Ms. Janet Nuckolls 2<sup>nd</sup> term expiring and not eligible for reappointment.*
- Planning Commission (3) – *2 eligible for reappointment, 1 did not wish to be reappointed.*
- Recreation Board (2) – *1 seat eligible for reappointment.*
- Library Board (1) – *current board member did not wish to be reappointed.*
- IDA – (5) – *4 eligible for reappointment, 1 vacant seat.*

Mr. Barker said with Council's permission, we would request to work with existing appointees to gauge their interest in reappointment in May. There was a consensus to recruit any additional seats by Council or City Staff and advertise only as needed. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve moving forward with the board appointments as mentioned. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker informed Council of a request from Tammy Smith, DSS Director. Ms. Smith explained one of the CPMT members had resigned due to relocating her job out of state. Ms. Smith made the recommendation to appoint Elisabeth Carico from Youth Advocacy Programs to the board. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the request. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

Keith Barker informed Council that Staff had a meeting with DHCD (Dept. of Housing and Community Development) representatives concerning a grant program from the state that was focused on food banks. He said we reached out to the two local food banks and God's Storehouse Soup Kitchen was willing to participate and felt they had sufficient resources to implement the grant. Mr. Barker explained after an initial ask to DHCD, we were advised to revise the request to be more robust and serve more citizens over the next 12 months. A follow up meeting with GSH was held to discuss the full grant request we drafted.

A copy of the request letter was provided to Council for review as well as a resolution for approval. Mr. Barker said our request would allow for purchases of hot meals from local restaurants, food boxes for families in the region, and equipment for food storage and packaging that can be located in the former Old Town Market building. He said as families in Galax, Carroll, and Grayson would be served, it was considered a regional grant. Funds would come to Galax and then be dispersed

to God's Storehouse, local restaurants, and bulk food suppliers. The City's Staff would assist in procurement of equipment, bulk food purchases, restaurant agreements, etc. Mr. Barker said the total request was \$530,450 in Community Development Block Grant funds with the allocation as shown:

- \$48,000 in administration;
- \$50,450 in equipment; and
- \$432,000 to meet the non-profit's operational goals and costs associated with feeding over 2,700 low-to-moderate income persons per month.

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the grant application submittal, adopt the requested resolution, and permit the City Manager to sign all necessary documents in the application process. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

## CITY MANAGER REPORT

Keith Barker gave an overview of the status of various projects and initiatives that were underway with the City or with regional boards that he was part of. He noted with Covid-19, some of our projects or board actions may have been delayed. These included:

- Bottom Area Project, Eastview Phase
- Eastview Phase II – the grant has been submitted to DHCD.
- VDOT Projects
- Stormwater Projects
- T.G. Vaughan Furniture Plant Project
- MRPDC Assistance.
- Animal Shelter – Noted the South addition was complete and the contractor had begun work on the North addition.
- Mr. Barker explained that we had closed the purchase on the former Oldtown Market building and we had submitted an ARC grant for renovation costs. Also began discussion with DHCD on a DHCD-CV grant and other construction grant program.

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

### **Councilman Larrowe**

- Addressed Council concerning an issue in the 900 block of East Stuart Drive where drivers exiting the parking lot, turning left, does not have a traffic signal which would safely allow them to do so. His suggestion was to add signage which would direct traffic pulling out from this area to be allowed to make a right turn only. After a discussion among Council members, Keith Barker said that he would follow up on the issue with the PD, Public Works & Safety Committee.
- Reported that the Workforce Center evaluations that he participated in went very well.

### **Councilman Haynes**

- Discussed an idea of Council members adopting certain areas of the City, such as their own neighborhoods and areas they may pass through on a regular basis, to help keep an eye out and report issues that may need attention. Also discussed the possibility of volunteer efforts from the community to do the same.

### **Councilwoman Ritchie**

- Discussed the IDA advertised parcels that were for sale in the City. Keith Barker said that some were advertised on the state's website. He said most were being advertised, but there were some properties that weren't, so Mr. Barker said that he would follow up on this. One of the areas discussed was the Hampton property which was around 35 acres.

### **Councilwoman White**

- Made Council aware that April was Autism Awareness Month. Ms. White said that she personally knew a young man who was autistic and would love to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at our next meeting in May. Ms. White also requested that a proclamation for Autism Awareness Month be approved at the next meeting.

### **Councilman Warr**

- Asked Keith Barker about what steps were required to have murals done on buildings downtown. Mr. Barker said the proposal would go through Zoning, Planning Commission, and then Council.
- Spoke on possible legislation to get more opened back up from the Covid shut down such as festivals & events. He encouraged contacting the Governor's office to make them aware of the impact of the closures. Mr. Barker noted that only Houston Fest had been canceled this year, but all others were scheduled to occur in 2021 with restrictions.

Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments.

Shannon Watkins, reporter from the Gazette, spoke briefly regarding the Galax Moose Lodge's decision to hold the Galax Fiddler's Convention Aug. 9 – 14. She said that she had just found out it was approved.

With no further public comments, Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor Mitchell at 8:04 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia:

- **Personnel Matter – § 2.2-3711 A.1 of the Code of Virginia** - Candidates for employment; the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, discipline, salaries, compensation, or resignation of employees.

Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

At 8:25 p.m. Council reconvened in open session. Mayor Greene certified that no items other than those allowed under the cited Virginia code section were discussed and no action was taken, with the following affirmation: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:25 p.m.

Willie T. Greene

Mayor

Kurt [Signature]

Clerk

