

Galax City Council
Minutes
September 13, 2021

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on September 13, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 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.

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

Special Action

Mayor Greene administered the Oath of Office to Officer Jonathan Mullins, Galax Police Department's newest officer.

Ms. Rhiannon Powers, District Three Governmental Cooperative Executive Director, provided an informative presentation to Council. She discussed the many resources District Three provides to help meet the needs and enhance the quality of life for the elderly, disabled, and transportation-dependent residents of their service area.

City Manager, Mr. Settlemyer requested approval from Council for the September consent agenda. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the following items:

- Adoption of minutes of the August 9, 2021 Regular Meeting.

Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and noted a correction of Martin Warr's name on the Joint Session minutes. 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.

New Business

Mayor Greene informed Council that a re-appointment had been requested of Mike Larrowe and Sharon Ritchie who serve on the District Three Board. The terms would be for one year and would expire each year on June 30. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to re-appoint Councilman Larrowe & Councilwoman Ritchie. Councilwoman White 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 Police Chief Cooper, who provided a brief background on a request to adopt and update a resolution with the New River Criminal Justice Training Academy. He explained the resolution was required in order to train officers whose certification was expiring. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to adopt and approve the resolution. 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.

Mayor Greene informed Council that Mr. Sam Bartlett with the Curtis Bartlett Fitness Center was present to make a request regarding a beer garden at an upcoming fundraiser at Felts Park on October 2. Mr. Bartlett explained that reflecting back on the same event that was held before, a proposed beer garden should help control the drinking to one location near the stage. In Council's discussion, it was brought up that there wasn't a policy regarding alcohol at Felts Park and they gave their thoughts on the request. Mr. Settlemyer informed Council that if the request was approved, it could be used as a pilot project, then it could be decided if a formal policy was needed or consideration on a case-by-case basis. Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to approve the request for a beer garden in Felts Park on October 2. Councilman Haynes seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of "yea": Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr. Mayor Greene and Councilwoman White voted "nay".

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of a request to appoint two representatives to the newly formed Galax Development Corporation. The board was established to promote and direct the development of the Vaughan property. Councilman Larrowe and Councilman Haynes currently serve on the committee that was originally established for the Vaughan project. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to appoint Councilman Larrowe and Councilman Haynes to the Galax Development Corporation. Councilwoman White 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. Brenda Marrah, Grants Administrator, addressed Council regarding contract negotiations with DHCD for a \$530,450 community development block grant award on the Galax Community Regional COVID Response Project. Ms. Marrah explained the project would contract with local restaurants to provide 200 meals three times a week; provide goods and foods to fulfill 100 food boxes a month; and would procure commercial grade food service equipment. The commercial food service equipment was for 406 West Oldtown Street. She noted that God's Storehouse Soup Kitchen would deliver the meals and the food boxes. Ms. Marrah closed by requesting Council's approval on a contract with DHCD for this project. Councilwoman White made a motion to approve the contract with DHCD. 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.

Ms. Marrah made a request of Council to approve a non-discrimination policy which was a requirement for the God's Storehouse grant with DHCD. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the policy. Councilwoman White 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. Marrah made a request of Council to approve a business and employment plan which was a requirement for the God's Storehouse Grant with DHCD. Councilwoman Ritchie made the

motion to approve the request. 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. Marrah made a request of Council to approve a resolution committing to the submission of an application for VDOT Revenue Sharing for stormwater on the Oldtown Street from Main Street to South Railroad Avenue. The Oldtown Street Stormwater Project would be funded in fiscal years 2027-2028 at an estimated cost of \$3,958,624. She said the City’s match was one-half or \$1,979,312. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve a resolution for the VDOT application and authorize the City Manager to execute documents necessary. 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. Marrah made a request of Council to approve the updated Capital Improvement Plan for the VDOT grant applications. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the request. Councilwoman White 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 Council set to hold a public hearing to consider an ordinance that would allow a tax exemption for newly purchased property by Chestnut Creek School of the Arts. Mayor Greene opened the floor for comments. Mr. Settlemyer explained that Ms. Chris Pollins, Director of CCSA had asked Council for Council to consider the ordinance that would allow a tax exemption for the property at 110 E. Oldtown Street that was recently purchased by CCSA to continue to be used as a pottery studio. He said the request was made under the Code of Virginia which allowed a non-profit to request a real estate tax exemption from the local government. With no further comments made, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed. Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the ordinance to allow the tax exemption for CCSA. 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.

Citizen Comments

None

Communication from City Manager

Mr. Settlemyer gave updates of various projects that were underway with the City which included:

- Bottom Area Project
- VDOT Projects
- Stormwater Projects

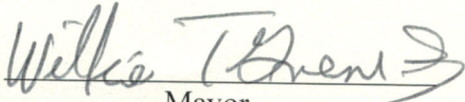
- T. G. Vaughan Furniture Plant Project
- DHCD Planning Grant for Opportunity Zone
- Comprehensive Plan
- God's Storehouse Grant
- Misc. updates

Communication from Mayor and City Council

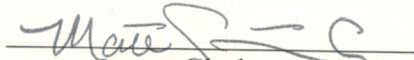
- Councilman Warr gave kudos for the festivals in Galax this summer which included the Galax Fiddler's Convention, the VW Hippies Festival, and the GFD activities & entertainment. He spoke regarding the Opportunity Galax webpage, blight issues at downtown businesses, upcoming fall & Christmas holiday decorating by downtown merchants and the GDA.
- Councilwoman White gave an update on God's Storehouse. She said they're trying to open to the public again and have been trying to find a takeout location possibly Rooftop. She also said there was talk about adding local foster families to the program so they could receive 3 hot meals per week.
- Councilwoman Ritchie discussed the City's Comprehensive Plan and the use of it as an economic development plan as well. She spoke briefly on RV parking in the downtown area.
- Vice Mayor Mitchell participated in a webinar with the Governor's office on ARPA Funding. He suggested Council schedule a work session in November on how to use the ARPA funds. Mr. Settlemeyer noted there were VML webinars on the subject.
- Councilman Haynes spoke on the Opportunity Galax web page, getting accurate information out to citizens about the Kipling Lane & T.G. Vaughan projects. He also reminded Council that Vision 20/20 needed a review and some additional work.
- Mayor Greene suggested that Council should combine a Vision 20/20 meeting with an ARPA funding meeting.
- Councilman Larrowe informed Council of the following topics:
 - T.G. Vaughan Project to be advertised in Business North Carolina online magazine (www.businessnc.com) which reaches approximately 140,000 to reach larger cities with possible investors for the project.
 - Gave dates for the T.G. Vaughan building tour.
 - God's Storehouse Grant possibly coordinating with District Three for assistance.
 - GFD – Length of Service Award Plan.
 - ARPA Funds – Possibility to assist with blight improvements for businesses.
 - Considering personal property tax rate adjustments for used vehicles.

Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to adjourn. 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.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:00 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

