

Galax City Council
Minutes
October 11, 2021

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on October 11, 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.

Mayor Greene prayed the opening prayer and Galax High School Student Athletes in attendance led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special Action

Mayor Greene recognized student athletes from Galax High School who competed and won at the state level in Virginia High School League Wrestling and Swimming events. Mayor Greene presented a proclamation for their achievements to the following: Wrestling - Brender Rojas, Swimming - Joey Jordan, Mia Llamas, Carlie Todd, Audrey Turner, Ryley Cocke, and Grace Justice.

Mayor Greene recognized God's Storehouse for being awarded the City's Innovation Award at the 2021 VML Conference. Mayor Greene informed those present that over 70 localities from Virginia had applied for this award in the category of Community Health. He further explained that "Project Light" was a partnership between the City of Galax and God's Storehouse and Soup Kitchen operating out of the former Old Town Market building. The project will serve the community as soup kitchen and food bank.

Communications from Staff, Boards, Commissions & Agencies

Mr. Rick Clark, Program Manager – Virginia DMV Highway Safety Office was in attendance to present the 2020 Zero Fatality award to Chief Cooper of the Galax Police Department. This was the fourth time Galax had received this award for zero roadway deaths.

Bridges For Recovery program administrators, Mr. Jason Stevens, CEO & Dr. Lendell Braud, Clinical Director, were present and gave an informative overview of the extensive addiction recovery services for the Galax community provided at their new facility located at 506 Cliffview Road.

Mayor Greene requested approval from Council for any items on the consent agenda. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the following items:

- Adoption of minutes of the September 13, 2021 Regular Meeting.

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.

New Business

City Manager, Mr. Matt Settlemyer, discussed the ordinance "Instituting Emergency Procedures to Ensure Continuity of City Government in Response to COVID-19" that was previously approved last year. Mr. Settlemyer explained the approved ordinance allowed boards & commissions to meet electronically if necessary, and the ordinance was linked to an emergency declaration that had since expired. The Solid Waste Authority requested that Galax, Grayson and Carroll renew the ordinance to provide flexibility with their meetings if needed. He noted that Carroll County had this item on their October agenda. Mr. Settlemyer said the City already had an Electronic Meeting Policy for Council that would not expire, and this ordinance was really designed for the other boards and commissions on which the City was represented. There was a consensus among Council to move forward with the ordinance. Mr. Settlemyer said that he would have the City's attorney to review, then it would be brought back at a later meeting.

Galax Fire Chief, Mike Ayers was present to discuss the replacement plan for the Galax Fire Department Tower 11 truck. Chief Ayers said the current ladder truck was now 34 years old and the average lifespan for such a truck was 25 years. It was purchased used in 1997 for \$450K. He recalled just how vital Tower 11 was to Galax in past fires as well as mutual aid for other localities because of its 102 ft. reach. He said the closest ladder truck is in Hillsville and only has a 75 ft. reach. Chief Ayers said the department was looking at \$67K in repair expenses this year if they kept the ladder truck and told of the thousands of dollars they've spent on this truck the last few years. He said that so much money was being paid for major repairs that it was becoming unrealistic to continue putting that much money into an older truck. Chief Ayers explained it was the intent of the fire department several months ago to buy a used truck. He and others traveled to Texas to inspect a truck that might be suitable. They found that it was not. Chief Ayers spoke in detail regarding different types of ladder trucks that could be purchased such as new, used, and demos. The City forgave a \$10K annual contribution that the FD was to make on the current truck loan so the FD could apply the payment toward a new used ladder truck. Chief Ayers said the City had agreed to give the FD the proceeds from sale of the old ladder truck when such sale took place.

Mr. Settlemyer explained that the USDA had worked with the City on several projects including the elementary school renovation and said the ladder truck would be a project that USDA could fund. It was noted that the City would also potentially be eligible for a \$50K grant towards the truck if we applied this fall. The current interest rate was 2.25% and would change quarterly.

Discussion took place regarding different financing options. Assuming a \$1.4M truck, \$50K grant, and the interest rate of 2.25%, we would estimate payments to be around \$150K per year for 10 years or \$106K per year for 15 years. The last truck was financed for approximately 15 years. Mr. Settlemyer said the Fire Department had offered to contribute to this purchase. He said he felt they should commit a minimum of \$10K per year to debt service as that was the promise on the previous truck. The City currently pays approximately \$56K per year on debt service for the previous truck with the last payment scheduled for FY2032.

It was noted that a local bank might give us a better interest rate than USDA. However, we would not get the \$50K grant from USDA if we got a loan at a bank. Mr. Settlemyer noted that after researching the issue, it did not appear ARPA funds could be used for this truck. Mr. Settlemyer confirmed the truck would need to go through the procurement & specs. process. He summarized the intent of Council regarding the truck. He said that he would start the process of working with USDA and through the process he would bring resolutions and approvals back to Council. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to move forward in the planning process of purchasing a ladder truck for the GFD, and authorize the City Manager to process necessary documents. 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.

Mayor Greene informed Council of a request to hold a public hearing at the November regular meeting regarding FY 2022 budget amendments associated with grants we had recently been awarded. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the public hearing and authorize the City Manager to take care of the advertising. 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.

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of a request to hold a public hearing in November in order to submit a DHCD Fall CDBG application for the Eastview Phase II housing rehabilitation project. Vice Mayor Mitchell made the motion to approve the public hearing and authorize the City Manager to take care of the advertising. 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.

Citizen Comments

Mr. Evan Henck addressed Council regarding the earlier discussion of the purchase of a ladder truck for GFD. Mr. Henck urged the City to investigate further into the purchase of a used ladder truck instead of a new one to save the City money.

Communication from City Manager

Mr. Settlemyer gave the City Manager's report to Council prior to the meeting which included various projects that were underway with the City (listed below). He offered to answer any questions from Council. Mr. Settlemyer also informed Council of a discussion with Steve Durbin, City Attorney, regarding a maintenance code for downtown businesses as well as a façade grant for vacant business sites. Mr. Settlemyer discussed workshops for Council regarding ARPA funds, a planning session, and Vision 20/20 meeting in the near future.

- 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

Council discussed Halloween falling on a Sunday this year. There was a consensus that regular trick or treating would be held on the actual date of Halloween, October 31 – per the City Code.

Communication from Mayor and City Council

- Councilman Larrowe discussed the following: Personal Property rates, Business License rates, and ARPA funds. He also discussed an IT Emergency Preparedness Plan, an IT Audit – and the importance of making sure we have solid cyber security for our City Departments. Councilman Larrowe also discussed the City's Strategic Planning, an idea for Twin County Airport – runway construction, and small business loans for non-profits.
- Councilman Haynes informed Council that he really enjoyed the ideas that he learned by attending the VML Conference.
- Vice Mayor Mitchell complimented all of the fall decorations downtown.
- Councilwoman Ritchie discussed the breakout sessions at the VML Conference which included the environment, retail improvements & ideas. She will be taking a 2-hour affiliated class and report back to Council.
- Councilwoman White spoke regarding the opening of a multi-use facility in Grayson County which would be grant funded. She also discussed grants to help the homeless through Rooftop.
- Councilman Warr discussed property taxes, the recruitment of outsiders to come to Galax, the comedy show sponsored by Christ Chapel Church was a big hit, and the Rex Theater being underused.
- Mayor Greene commented that the VML Conference was very good this year and there was good networking there.

Closed Session

With no further public comments, Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Councilman Haynes at 8:15 p.m. to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia: **§ 2.2-3711 A.1 Code of Virginia-Personnel Matters**

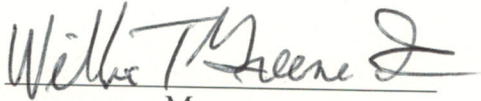
Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, and Council Warr.

At 9:00 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 affirmation: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

Councilman Haynes 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 Larowe, and Councilman Warr.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:00 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

