

Galax City Council
Minutes
February 15, 2022

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on February 15, 2022, 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 White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Councilman Larrowe prayed the opening prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance - Vice Mayor White recognized the Galax Middle School Kindness Club who was present to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special Action

Mayor Greene recognized Greg Talley & Sam Johnson on their retirements from the Galax Water Plant. They were presented with plaques of appreciation and a watch.

Mayor Greene administered the Oath of Honor to Galax Police Officer, Amber Lineberry, and welcomed her to the Galax Police Department.

Communications from Staff, Boards, Commissions & Agencies

Mayor Greene recognized Mr. William Bottomley, creator of High-Country Lights, with a resolution of appreciation from the City of Galax. Mr. Bottomley gave a brief update on the success of the light show. Council expressed their gratitude for his dedication in bringing such a wonderful source of Christmas entertainment to the City of Galax at Felts Park. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the resolution. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Yancey Powers, AIA, presented a brief presentation to Council on a Downtown bathroom design proposal. Mr. Settlemyer explained the City was still working on the property swap/tax release to take ownership of the property.

Corbin Stone with Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates presented the FY 2020-21 Audit findings to Council. After a discussion with Council and answering questions, Mr. Stone said that he was pleased with the audit considering we were dealing with Covid.

Consent Agenda

All items on the consent agenda are considered routine, to be enacted by one motion without discussion. If a member of the governing body requests discussion of an item, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately.

Mayor Greene requested approval from Council for the following items on the consent agenda:

- Adoption of minutes of the November 16, 2021 Special Meeting
- Adoption of minutes of the January 10, 2022 Regular Meeting

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

Unfinished Business

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of a request to consider the assignment of members to City Council Committees. The Council member’s preference for the proposed committees were as follows:

- Audit and Finance: Mike Larrowe & Sharon Ritchie (who volunteered)
- Tourism and Downtown: Sharon Ritchie, Martin Warr, Travis Haynes, Beth White
- Communication: Martin Warr, Travis Haynes, Beth White
- Public Services: Evan Henck, Travis Haynes, Willie Greene
- Commerce: Evan Henck, Sharon Ritchie, Mike Larrowe

Mr. Settlemyer noted that additional committees such as Education and Infrastructure may be created at a later date. He said meeting schedules could then be established and staff assigned for committee support.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the assignment of Council committee members. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of a request to appropriate funding of \$530,450.00 from DHCD/Community Development Block Grant Program UNSO COVID-19 for the Galax Community Regional COVID Response Project. Also, to further direct these funds to be placed in the Galax City Budget expended solely for the purposes defined in the DHCD contract.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to appropriate the funding from the DHCD/Community Development Block Grant Program UNSO COVID-19 for the Galax Community Regional COVID Response Project. Also, to further direct these funds to be placed in the Galax City Budget expended solely for the purposes defined in the DHCD contract. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

New Business

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council that the City had met with the Twin County Chamber and the Galax Downtown Association to develop the attached 2022 Calendar of Events that would require street closures for the upcoming year.

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the 2022 Calendar of Events. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Mr. Settlemyer made everyone aware of a suggestion at last November’s Planning Session that the City explore the idea of leasing the Rex Theatre for private management as that may generate a broader array of shows and events. He explained that our attorney, Steve Durbin, had advised that all leases or sales of real property by a locality can only be done after the holding of a public hearing in accordance with Va. Code Section 15.2-1800. Mr. Settlemyer therefore recommended calling a public hearing for March 14, and then move forward with an advertisement to solicit proposals for the management of the Rex Theatre.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the request for a public hearing on March 14 for the Rex Theater discussion, and authorize the City Manager to advertise the public hearing. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of a letter from Susan Tilley, Galax Schools Superintendent, which notified us of expiring terms of two school board positions. He requested Council’s authorization to advertise the appointments to the school board with interviews at the April Council Meeting and appointments at the May Council Meeting.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to advertise the expiring terms and move forward with the interviews and appointments. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion. It was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr. Councilman Henck abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest.

Mayor Greene announced the Planning Commission had a vacancy that had been advertised in the Gazette and on the City website. He said we had received a couple of well qualified applicants. Mr. Russell Austin, who had sent in a letter of interest, was present and introduced himself to Council. He gave a brief description of his past education, employment, and interests as well as his reason for moving to Galax. Vice Mayor White made the motion to appoint Mr. Russell Austin to the Galax Planning Commission. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Mayor Greene announced a vacancy in the Industrial Development Authority. He said it had been advertised in the Gazette and on the City’s website. Mayor Greene said we had received several

well qualified applicants to serve on the IDA. After discussing the applicants, Councilman Haynes made the motion to appoint Mr. Douglas Vaught to the IDA. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Mayor Greene announced this was the date and time Council chose to hold a public hearing regarding Stephen Peisner, who had requested a rezoning of Parcel 36-47 at 613 Glendale Road from B-2 Business General to R-5 Residential and Office. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments. Ms. Stephanie Dalton, GIS/Zoning Administrator, was present and provided further information on the request. Ms. Dalton explained the rezoning request was made by the owner to make the property more marketable. She also explained the Planning Commission unanimously approved this re-zoning. Their information was provided to Council for review. With no further comments, Mayor Greene closed the public hearing. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the rezoning request. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Citizens Comments

Mr. Robert Tasselmyer address Council regarding a proposed festival called “Get Outside Galax.” Mr. Tasselmyer explained this was a festival to get everyone outside and to bring together people from gyms, outfitters, music vendors, etc. He requested that W. Grayson Street be closed off for the event. After a discussion with Council, there was a consensus that May 14 would be the date to hold the festival. Since the 2022 Street Closure Calendar for Downtown Galax was approved earlier in the meeting, Vice Mayor White made the motion to amend the calendar to include the “Get Outside Galax” festival. Councilman Warr seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Communication from City Manager

Mr. Settlemyer reminded Council that his update was included in their packet and he was always available for any questions that may have.

Communication from Mayor and City Council

- Councilman Warr:
 - Parking space numbering for vendors of festivals
 - Chamber of Commerce and the new website, Twin County Events
 - Issues with parking downtown and parking tickets

- Councilman Henck:
 - Concerns for Chestnut Creek flooding issues – Vaughn Bassett
 - Army Corps of Engineers
 - Federal Insurance Program not participating
 - Limited funding for a study

- Application to dredge Chestnut Creek
 - Mike Woodel, Assistant Public Works Dir. spoke regarding previous dredging
- Councilwoman Ritchie:
 - Public Art Committee
 - Galax Leaves painted on sidewalks with local musician names
 - Various art project ideas
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- Vice Mayor White:
 - Update on God's Storehouse activities
 - Food boxes & meals
- Councilman Haynes:
 - Project Manager position inquiry
 - Food City intersection traffic light inquiry
 - Need for line painting on municipal lots
 - City owned drive thru bank property
- Councilman Larrowe:
 - Thanked Council for approving Council Committees
 - Committees benefit Galax citizens
 - Allows feedback from citizens
 - District Three Mountain Lynx Transit Buses
 - No fees through September 2023
 - Concern for trash in Downtown Galax
 - Organize a clean-up day
 - Vaughan Project update
 - Housing survey done
 - Demonstrated the need for 150 apartments

With no further comments, Councilman Warr made the motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:30 p.m.



 Mayor



 Clerk

