

Galax City Council
Minutes
March 14, 2022

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on March 14, 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, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilwoman White, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Mayor Greene asked for a moment of silence for the Ukrainians.

Councilman Haynes prayed the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special Action

Vice Mayor White read aloud a Proclamation by City Council in support of Social Workers for National Social Workers month. Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the proclamation as presented. 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.

Communications from Staff, Boards, Commissions, & Agencies

Mayor Greene welcomed Dr. Dean Sprinkle, President of Wytheville Community College, who gave an informative update on WCC. Dr. Sprinkle informed Council that the enrollment of students in the fall of 2021 was 1,715. Also, he informed Council of the Early College Program which began last year after discussing with Ms. Susan Tilley, Galax School Superintendent. Ten GHS students have been taking the classes at the Crossroads Institute. He said the program would give high school students an early college experience which would be very beneficial to them. After providing Council with statistics, Dr. Sprinkle further answered questions from Council regarding the suggestion of better promotion of the trade programs that were available at WCC, such as carpentry, HVAC, plumbing & electrical. Councilman Larrowe noted that these skills had diminished in this area and there was going to be a need for these jobs in the next few years. Councilman Larrowe suggested that it would be beneficial to the students if they could identify their interests earlier to help direct them to these trade programs. Councilman Henck asked how the Galax locations of WCC (Crossroads) was fitting into their program and offered further assistance from the City if needed at the Galax location. Dr. Sprinkle said that he appreciated the offer, but there had been heavy growth in our area. He suggested encouraging the continued growth and noted that he would let us know if a need came up.

Consent Agenda

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

- Adoption of minutes of the February 15, 2022 Regular Meeting

Councilwoman Haynes made the motion to approve the consent agenda. 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. Matt Settlemyer, City Manager, informed Council of the consideration of an appointment to the Galax Planning Commission. He explained the Planning Commission had one vacancy that had been advertised in the Gazette and on the City website. Letters of interest were shared with Council. Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to appoint Ms. Janet Nuckolls to the remaining term of Ms. Margo Crouse. 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.

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of the consideration of an appointment to the Galax DSS Advisory Board. He explained there was a need to appoint a replacement for C.M. Mitchell. Councilman Henck offered to serve if Council approved. Councilwoman White made the motion to appoint Councilman Henck. 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.

Mr. Settlemyer informed Council of the need for approval of a USDA Resolution which would authorize and provide for the incurrence of indebtedness for the purpose of purchasing a ladder truck. Mr. Settlemyer explained in order to schedule a closing date for the Ladder Truck USDA loan, Council needed to approve the USDA Resolution. He said this was a 15-year loan in the amount of \$1,542,500 at an interest rate of 2.125%. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the USDA Resolution as presented. Councilman Haynes 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 and approval of purchase for a 2022 Freightliner M2-106 with attached Heil PT1000 20yd Rear Load Refuse Body. He explained our Capital Improvement Plan included a replacement sanitation truck for FY 23. He said unfortunately, we had not been able to keep our existing vehicles on the road consistently and were in need of an emergency purchase. Mr. Settlemyer further explained the sanitation truck loan expired this year so it would not have an overall impact on our budget, except in the sense that we would have an expense in FY 22 that we anticipated in FY 23. He said the cost of the vehicle would be approximately \$193,000. After a discussion of questions from Council, Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the purchase of the Freightliner for solid waste collection. Councilman Haynes 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.

Public Hearings

Mayor Greene announced this was the date and time set by Council to hold a public hearing to consider the rezoning of parcel 64-97 located at 310 S. Main St. from B-2 Business General to R-2 Medium Density Residential. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments.

Ms. Stephanie Dalton, Galax GIS/Zoning Administrator, informed Council that Mr. Lindsay Honeycutt had requested a zoning change to Parcel 64-97, located at 310 S. Main Street, from B-2 Business General to R-2 Medium Density Residential. She said he was selling the property and the interested party would only go through with the purchase if they could live there, which would only be allowed if it was rezoned to R-2. Ms. Dalton further explained that the Galax Planning Commission had met on March 9, 2022, to consider Mr. Honeycutt's request, and it was their recommendation that the request be approved.

Mayor Greene closed the public hearing after there were no additional public comments. Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the request as presented. 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 that a second public hearing was set by Council for this date and time to consider the approval of the rezoning of parcel 45-65 located at 310 T. George Vaughan Jr. Road from M-2 Heavy Industrial to B-2 General Business. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments. Ms. Stephanie Dalton, Galax GIS/Zoning Administrator, informed Council that Ms. Wenter Lakea Brown had requested a zoning change to Parcel 45-65 located at 310 T. George Vaughan Jr Road. Ms. Dalton explained the property was currently zoned M-2 Heavy Industrial. Ms. Brown had requested it be rezoned to B-2 General Business. Ms. Brown had been leasing this property from Thomas and Rene Neff. She would like to convert the first floor of the building to a daycare. If approved, the owners had also requested a Conditional Use Permit to allow for apartment use on the second floor. Ms. Dalton noted that the Planning Commission had met on March 9, 2022 to discuss the requests and had made the recommendation to approve to the rezoning change and approve the Conditional Use Permit. Councilman Haynes questioned the traffic flow in that area and safety concerns. Councilwoman Ritchie added that there was a need for daycares in our area. Mayor Greene closed the public hearing after there were no additional public comments. Councilwoman White made the motion to approve the request as presented. 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 this was the date and time Council set for a public hearing to consider a lease of Rex Theater in accordance with Virginia Code Section 15.2-1800, purchase, sale, use, of real property. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments. Mr. Settlemyer informed Council that it was suggested at last November's planning session that the City explore the idea of leasing the Rex Theater for private management as that may generate a broader array of shows and events. He explained that all leases or sales of real property by a locality could only be done after the holding of a public hearing in accordance with Va. Code Section 15.2-1800. Mr. Settlemyer added that since the lease arrangement did not need to go through procurement, the City could begin to negotiate with Crooked Road Entertainment if Council so desired, and advertise for additional proposals at the same time. He said City Attorney, Steve Durbin would have additional

information that should be available soon on the matter. Additional public speakers who presented their reasons against leasing the Rex to private management included:

- Ms. Laura Romanowski, Twin County Arts Council Director, who noted the Rex was the Arts Council & The Galax Theater Guild's home base for plays held over the years. She said much money was raised by their organization from the community to purchase seats for the Rex as well as other improvements for the lighting and acoustics. She said they had an agreement with the City to use the Rex 3 times per year for their activities such as rehearsals, productions, etc. Ms. Romanowski said the Rex Theater is a community asset used for many activities. She urged Council to carefully consider the need for flexibility for the community to still be able to use the Rex Theater if a management company leased it.
- The Davis family who consisted of Derrick Davis, Coleman Davis, Rita Davis, and Anthony Davis, individually spoke regarding how heartfelt and special the Rex Theater was to each of them. Mr. Derrick Davis, Galax Farmer's Market Manager and Tourism Center employee, spoke how Galax had utilized the Rex Theater in the past, and urged Council to reconsider leasing the Rex to an outside management company, as he felt it would no longer be a community asset.
- Mr. Brian Sizer, an owner and manager of 98.1 & 96.5 Radio Station in Galax, spoke regarding the potential of the Rex Theater. He said it had been discussed by many people for years, but the Rex had never lived up to its full potential. He proposed the Rex be leased to a group of investors who would not undermine, hurt, or compete with the community group's involvement with the Rex Theater, but to help these groups more by making a positive economic impact to the Rex and Galax. He said that we are in the Bluegrass Capital of the world, rich in heritage & traditions and he felt there's lots of potential to bring more people to our area which would be a big asset.
- Susan Branscome urged Council not to lease the Rex Theater, but to keep it as it had been within the local community, directed by the groups who use it to bring the world to Galax through plays, speakers, etc. She also spoke regarding the potential of a new Tourism Director who may bring new ideas for the use of the Rex.
- Mr. Sizer spoke again to reiterate his point that his group would not shut the community out of the Rex. He said that they would work with and welcome the community so it would work for everyone.
- Butch Phillips who was from the group Mr. Sizer spoke of, said that he felt the Rex Theater was a crown jewel and it was his desire to revitalize the Rex for a positive economic impact for the City and community.

Mr. Settlemyer reminded Council that they didn't need to discuss specifics, but if Council would like to move forward, the direction was needed from them in order to move on with the requests for proposals. Mayor Greene closed the public hearing after no further comments were made. He added that he felt that everyone that was involved wanted the Rex Theater to succeed. We just needed to work together. After a lengthy and in-depth conversation among Council members, Councilman Warr made the motion to move forward in advertising a Request for Proposals for the lease and management of the Rex Theater with restrictions and guidelines. Councilman Haynes

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.

Citizen Comments

Ms. Sylvia Richardson addressed Council regarding concerns with her neighbor in an on-going issue with a fence blocking visibility when exiting her driveway. Also, Ms. Richardson made her thoughts known about the blight around her residence on Calloway Street, Hanks Street, and Garrett Street and how more needs to be done by the City to improve this area.

Communication from the City Manager

Mr. Settlemyer discussed with Council possible dates on FY23 Budget Calendar to meet with Ms. Susan Tilley, Galax School Superintendent, to discuss the School Budget for FY2023. It was decided that the meeting would take place on March 16 with the Council’s Audit & Finance Committee where all Council members and public would be able to attend.

Communication from Mayor and City Council

Councilman Larrowe

- City Council Committee Structure – Off to a good start. Projects have been identified and the Committees should serve as a catalyst to move forward on the City’s Strategic Plan and objectives for the City.
- Vaughan Project Update – Gave updates on recent & upcoming meetings with the two groups involved with the Vaughan Project. Summit Engineering Group and the Galax Development Corp. (GDC). Discussion will include an evaluation of creating a larger “district” around the Vaughan project area which would tie this area to Downtown Galax.
- Rex Theater – Suggested that criteria included in ad for proposed parties interested in submitting RFPs would be scored for the Rex Theater so the Community aspects are fully addressed. They should be commended for the important service they provide.
- Low blood supplies. Suggested a blood drive to keep the donations local. Possible request to Governor for assistance with this.

Councilman Haynes

- EMS Committee met – still having staffing issues. Pay increase has helped some, but the issues still exist.
- Discussed the issue of a patients who leave rehabilitation programs in Galax. They have no way home - back to where they previously lived, so they are stuck in Galax with addiction problems. Discussed a possible ordinance for the programs in which they were taking part in to provide transportation or a way for them to get back home. Possibly discuss with City Attorney.

Vice Mayor White

- Thanked the City & Council for everything showing her support in the passing of her father.

Councilman Henck

- Appreciation for the City workers that fly under the radar and are unnoticed. He also appreciates the City Manager and the work he does for the City.
- Thanked Sylvia Richardson for coming to speak. Interested in better utilizing the Rosenwald Felts building in addition to Head Start, possibly creating a day care there.
- Galax Carroll Grayson Animal Shelter – Possibly look into making sure all localities are paying their even share of costs for the shelter.
- Recycling – Spoke with Grayson Asst. Admin. Mitch Smith are still doing recycling there. Possibly ways join their efforts.
- The need for lighting on track at Mountain View Park. Lights would shine directly down on track, not disturbing the neighbors.
- Galax Community Foundation question about funding for outdoor pool improvements. It was clarified that when Duke Life Point merged with TCRH there was a discussion of funding a new aquatics center where the outdoor pool is located, but this never came to fruition. Mayor Greene added that we did not receive funds for this center.

Councilman Warr

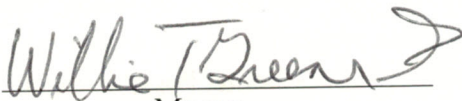
- Truly appreciates all the City workers
- Thanked the ones who came to discuss the Rex Theater
- Downtown & Tourism Committee met and went well and was successful. Now are keeping issue lists and also wish lists for the City to discuss at the Committee meetings.
- GDA has elected a new board. Meets first Monday each month.
- Discussed scheduling a clean-up Downtown Galax on April 5.

Mayor Greene

- Landfill meeting – going well.
- Twin Co. Airport – grant funding discussed.
- Juneteenth Holiday – Fredrick Douglas program to possibly come to Galax on this holiday.

Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. 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.

ADJOURNMENT 8:30 p.m.



 Mayor



 Clerk