

Galax City Council  
Minutes  
July 11, 2022

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on July 11, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:03 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.

Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Councilman Haynes at 6:04 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.

Vice Mayor White 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.

At 6:13 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 White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

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

### **SPECIAL ACTION**

Mayor Greene announced Mr. Barry Moore as the new City Manager. He welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Moore. Councilman Haynes made the motion to approve the hiring of Mr. Barry Moore for the Galax City Manager. 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.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the contract for Mr. Barry Moore. 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.

Mayor Greene and Mr. Moore signed the City Manager’s contract. Mr. Moore said that he and his wife, Soledad were blessed to be here in Galax. He gave Council a brief biography of himself and expressed how impressed he and his were with our hospital and our area. Mr. Moore explained that his leadership style was simple; if he can’t do it, he said that he won’t ask others to do it. He said that Galax has good culture, good people, a good location, and it’s a real gem.

Mr. Moore will begin his duties as City Manager on August 15. Mayor Greene said that he and Council were looking forward to working with Mr. Moore. He also thanked Council for their hard work in the search for the City Manager.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Council Meeting of June 13, 2022 - Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the June 13, 2022 regular meeting minutes. 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.

Called Meeting of June 27, 2022 – Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the June 27, 2022 called meeting minutes. Vice mayor White 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.

## OLD BUSINESS

### School Board Appointments

Interim City Manager, Judy Taylor-Gallimore discussed the open seats on the Galax School Board. She stated that Council was required by *Virginia Code § 22.1-29.1* to hold public hearings for school board appointments. Therefore, Ms. Taylor-Gallimore proposed that Council set a public hearing to receive input regarding incumbent members and new appointments. After a discussion, Council agreed to hold a public hearing at a special called meeting on July 25 at 6:00 p.m. with interviews being held at that time in closed session. There was also a consensus for Ms. Judy Taylor-Gallimore to publish the public hearing, and re-advertise for interest in the open seats on July 15. Ms. Taylor-Gallimore noted it was not necessary for the recent 2022 applicants to re-apply since their letters were still active. Letters of interest would be accepted through July 22. Everyone was in agreement for the school board appointments to be made at the August 8 regular City Council meeting. Vice Mayor White made the motion to hold a public hearing for school board appointments on July 25 at 6:00 p.m. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion. Councilman Henck abstained from voting due to a conflict under the following **VA Code - § 2.2-3112** Prohibited conduct concerning personal interest in a transaction. His wife serves on the Galax School Board. It was then approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

### Appropriation of FY2023 Galax City Budget

Judy Taylor-Gallimore explained City Council was required to appropriate the FY23 budget that was approved at the June 27 meeting. The approved budget was read aloud as follows:

- General Fund \$24,834,062
- Utility Fund \$ 4,505,200
- Storm Water Fund \$ 607,500

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to appropriate the FY23 City budget 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.



## Approval and Appropriation of FY2023 Galax City Schools Budget

Judy Taylor-Gallimore explained Council was required to approve and appropriate the total FY23 Galax City School budget. The budget was read aloud as follows:

- General Operating Fund      \$23,625,356 (includes \$4,062,714 local support)
- Cafeteria Fund                 \$ 871,270
- Textbook Fund                 \$ 168,122 (includes \$37,577 local support)

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve and appropriate the FY23 Galax City School budget as presented. Councilman Warr seconded the motion. Councilman Henck abstained from voting due to a conflict under the following **VA Code - § 2.2-3112** Prohibited conduct concerning personal interest in a transaction. His wife serves on the Galax School Board. The request was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Warr.

## Public Hearing - Amendment to FY22 Galax City Budget

Mayor Greene announced this was the date Council set for a public hearing regarding an amendment to the FY22 budget. Mayor Greene opened the floor for comments. Ms. Judy Taylor-Gallimore informed Council of the details regarding the FY22 budget amendment. She explained that all the items in the requested amendment were for grant funding that wasn't previously recognized. The overall amendment to the Utility Fund was \$50,000. The amendment to the General Fund totaled \$281,982. Ms. Taylor-Gallimore explained the funds were from various grants which included VDEM, VDOT, DHCD, and DCJS. Council discussed a couple of questions, then with no further comments, Mayor Greene closed the public meeting. Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the FY2022 budget amendment for the Utility Fund totaling \$50,000 and the budget amendment for the General Fund totaling \$281,982 as presented. Vice Mayor White 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. Vice Mayor White thanked Ms. Jolena Young for her efforts in administering grants for the City of Galax.

## Public Hearing – VDOT Smart Scale Project

Mayor Greene announced this was the date Council set for a public hearing regarding the SMART Scale Project application for 5,000 feet of sidewalk from Hanes Road to Walmart. Mayor Greene declared the meeting open for comments. Judy Taylor-Gallimore informed Council the design would include signaled cross walks, and ADA landing pads at the Hanes Road and Cranberry Road intersections. She said the project performance period would begin in 2025 or 2026 with an estimated cost of \$4,892,344. She said the SMART Scale Project was a 100% grant funded project. Mayor Greene asked for any public comments. With none, Ms. Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, provided additional information explaining that in addition to a public hearing, a VDOT application required adoption of a City Council Resolution and Capital Improvement Plan including the proposed project.



The documents along with a Gantt Chart were distributed in the Council Packet. Mrs. Young explained that based on the Gantt Chart Analysis, Grants Administration and Engineering have recommended to delay application for the sidewalk project for two years. Of specific concern, was the Water Facility project and a large Stormwater Project that will be occurring over the same time frame as the proposed Phase 1 sidewalk project. During the next two years, the current E. Stuart Drive Project from Larkspur to Hanes Road would be completed and information learned from that project could be incorporated in the application for the E. Stuart Drive Project from Hanes Road to Cherry Hill intersection. Mrs. Young said staffing would be more stable following the departure of the City Manager and retirements of upcoming key department heads including the Grant Administrator, Engineering Director, and Public Works. After a discussion, there was a consensus to continue with the application. Councilman Larrowe pointed out some inconsistencies in the CIP and asked Mrs. Young to revise the CIP and resolution for adoption at the called Council meeting on July 25. David Hankley, Commissioner of Revenue, spoke briefly regarding succession planning.

Councilman Henck made the motion to table the VDOT Smart Scale Project discussion until the called meeting on July 25. Councilman Larrowe interjected confirming that Mrs. Young would continue to work on the application while it was tabled. Mrs. Young confirmed that she was continuing to work on the application. 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.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### Advertisement of Delinquent Real Estate Tax List

Judy Taylor-Gallimore made a request of Council to consider approving the City’s delinquent real estate tax list for publication in the Gazette. She explained the delinquent taxes listed were as of June 30, 2022. Also, Ms. Taylor-Gallimore said the list would be amended to reflect any additional payments received prior to sending the ad for publication. Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the publication of the delinquent taxes. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion. Councilman Henck requested in the future if Ms. Taylor-Gallimore could add a column to the delinquent taxes for the year it became delinquent and put in order from oldest to newest to help understand how old some of the taxes were. After a discussion, Ms. Taylor-Gallimore confirmed the total of delinquent taxes had remained about the same for the past few years. The request 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.

### Social Services Board Appointment

Judy Taylor-Gallimore informed Council of a request from Tammy Smith, Director of Social Services. Ms. Smith advised that Court Services had asked that the new 27<sup>th</sup> CSU Director, Samantha Higgins, be appointed as the CPMT representative. Court Services also asked that the current CPMT representative from Court Services, Stuart Cheeks, be moved to the alternate. Per Ms. Smith, Court Services is a mandated member of CPMT, but council appoints the representative.



Councilman Haynes made the motion to appoint Ms. Samantha Higgins as the CPMT representative with Ms. Stuart Cheeks appointed as the alternate. Vice Mayor White 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.

Councilman Henck asked Ms. Smith why our local Court Services Director, Stuart Cheeks, would not continue and why in favor of Samantha Higgins, the new 27<sup>th</sup> CSU Director. Ms. Smith stated that when Ms. Higgins became the new director, she asked to be put on as the CPMT representative. Ms. Smith stated that Ms. Cheeks reports to Ms. Higgins.

#### Amendment to § 148.80 Notice of Illegal Parking of the Code of the City of Galax

Judy Taylor-Gallimore informed Council of an issue brought to her attention within our City Code regarding parking fines. She said the referenced code did not provide for a course of action for unpaid fines/penalties. Councilman Henck said Chief Cooper spoke with him regarding this issue. He pointed out the officers were writing parking citations, but when they weren't paid, the magistrate said there wasn't a provision in our City Code to take further actions to have a summons or warrant issued. Chief Cooper submitted ordinance examples for localities, and Blacksburg's ordinance was used as a model. Councilman Henck further discussed the proposed amendment of Chapter 148-80 of the City Code, Notice of Illegal Parking. The proposed amendment would authorize the City Manager or his designee to send a notice to the owner of the vehicle if a ticket had not been paid, warning him if it was not paid within 5 days of receipt of the letter, a summons would be issued against the owner of the vehicle. A certification in writing for the parking citation would then be sent to the Clerk of Galax General District Court for further action. The notice would also state anyone who did not comply to the terms would be subject to the penalties stated in Chapter 148-24 which provides for a maximum fine of \$100. Councilman Henck made the motion to advertise a public hearing for the next Council meeting on August 8 for public input on the amendment to the City Code. Vice Mayor White seconded the motion. After additional discussion by Council, the request 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**

Judy Taylor-Gallimore informed Council that she had inquired about attendance of legal counsel at the Galax City Council meetings. She said our legal counsel, Steve Durbin, had indicated that he was willing to do this if Council was interested. We would need to discuss scheduling options with him if there is interest. Ms. Taylor-Gallimore said she felt this would be something very helpful to have for our meetings should questions or situations arise. After further Council discussion regarding requesting pricing, there was a consensus to defer the decision until Barry Moore, the new City Manager, was on board, after August 15.

#### **COMMUNICATION FROM MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES**



## Mayor Greene

- Discussed the need for Public Works - Street Dept. employees to help more with closing the streets for festivals. The barriers had been being dropped off downtown by public works, then it was left up to the Police Department to handle setting them up and removing them. He said there needed to be an official policy for how and who would be handling closing the streets. Mayor Greene said it seemed Public Works – Street Department, would be the appropriate department to handle this issue. Chief Cooper said there was no guarantee that officers would be able to move the barriers and assist with this since the police department was currently short staffed.
- Attended the following meetings or events:
  - VML Board meeting - Offer valuable services to its members
  - VML Conference scheduled for October, 2022
  - Tourism and Downtown Committee
  - God’s Storehouse food box delivery
  - Attended graduation at Police Academy in Blacksburg
  - Landfill and Social Services meetings
  - New Fire Truck Ceremony at the Galax Fire Department
  - First Safety Public Safety Committee
  - Twin County Airport – runway extension discussed

## Councilman Warr

- Informed Council that the recently approved street closures for July, August, and September, were discussed at the last Tourism and Downtown Committee meeting with Ms. Patti Price-Love, the Galax Tourism and Events Coordinator. Councilman Warr said there was a consensus as part of her duties as the Events Coordinator, Ms. Price-Love would coordinate the setup, removal of the barriers, and other preparations for street closures with the appropriate departments.
- Discussed the need for help and coordination new festivals. He discussed Ms. Patti Price-Love’s job title and duties which would be discussed at the next Tourism and Downtown Committee. There was a consensus to discuss setting policies for handling festivals downtown as well and guidelines for new festivals. Councilman Haynes suggested setting a fee to charge the festivals to help with the City’s costs.
- Issues regarding vacant downtown business properties and delinquent taxes were discussed which also included:
  - Parking needs downtown
  - Ordinance for absentee property ownersCouncilman Larrowe stated that he felt the parking study was needed and a good idea which should be pursued. He further discussed the dilapidated building issue, and suggested that the Tourism and Downtown Committee contact outside resources to get answers of how to move forward handling these property issues, then report back to Council. There was a consensus to move forward with this request.
- Pleased to announce several businesses have opened downtown and said we need to support them.
- Judy Taylor-Gallimore and Councilman Warr discussed a group, Friends of the Blue Ridge, who have offered a grant opportunity to supply bike racks for Downtown Galax.
- Rex Lease going well. BRB group has been continuing to move forward with plans for the Rex and well-known groups have been scheduled for shows in the near future.
- Team Galax and Celebrate Galax activities were discussed as well as Smoke on the Mountain.

### Councilman Henck

- Visited Albany Industries with Commerce Committee. Discussed the need for more daycares. More space for daycares were badly needed in our area.
- Toured Boss Lumber and discussed a problem issue regarding water run off on a closed street which had caused a fence at Boss Lumber to be pushed down on their property. Discussed the issue with Interim City Manager, Judy Taylor-Gallimore.
- Joined the DSS Advisory Board and toured the building looking at issues within the building, and discussed their desire to find a better building space.
- Public Services Committee meeting held. Parking issues were discussed as well as Jolena Young discussed the Radio Interoperability Project.
- Discussed the resources and needs of the Galax Police Department with Chief Cooper recently.

### Vice Mayor White

- Discussed the needs of the Galax Police Department and asked if a comparative salary range from surrounding localities could be provided so comparisons could be done. Judy Taylor-Gallimore confirmed some have already been received. Chief Cooper informed Council that on average, our officers were starting at \$29,000 where other localities such as Wytheville were starting officers at \$40,000. He said we were way off and losing officers because of this.
- Jolena Young asked if the comparative study would include Communication Officers as well. Vice Mayor White agreed to include this department in obtaining salary scales.

### Councilman Haynes

- Discussed the Public Services Committee meeting findings regarding Public Works infrastructure issues. It was discovered there were hiccups the way complaints were being handled. Not inspection based, only complaint based.
- Sound system was installed at Felts Park. It has already been used by several groups. Brings a lot to the park.
- Discussed all of the attendees at the Forth of July festivities at Felts Park. It was a huge success. Next year's celebration "Party in the Park" was already being discussed.

### Councilman Larrowe

- Audit and Finance Committee has not met since the last Council meeting where Council made the budget recommendations at the regular June meeting.
- We will be meeting soon to review City's quarterly results, the specifics of the IT Proposal that we have had on hand, and introduce an evaluation of consideration of real estate exemptions related to the elderly and disabled, especially since we had to bump up our real estate tax rates. He asked David Hankley, Commissioner of Revenue, for some data on exemptions to help us to understand the size of the issue so we could move forward.
- Commerce Committee hasn't met recently, but said thanks to Councilman Henck for his efforts in arranging the visitations and outreach on April 27, we have continued to receive good information which generally included three things: transportation, day care, and general availability of labor.



- Continued plans to work on definition and the appropriateness of not-for-profit real estate and personal property tax exemptions as requested by David Hankley, Commissioner of Revenue. Attorney Steve Durbin had sent information. Councilman Larrowe hadn't had time to review yet.
- Informed Council Region 2 Workforce Dev. Board was working in conjunction with the SWVA Workforce Dev. Board on pursuing a \$25M grant through ARPA funds to address properly identifying in filling the needs of our region's employers and workers with training and other resources in those areas including health care. Designed to target certain industries in our region.
- District Three assists our seniors and helps with transportation with the transit buses. Discussed several benefits which can help the elderly.
- The Small Area Plan in conjunction with the work being done by Summit Design and Engineering, the work in nearing completion in the next couple week and should be complete by September or October. Councilman Larrowe discussed the benefits of the plan.
- Council discussed briefly the upcoming Fiddler's Convention, August 8 -11. The Farmer's Market was discussed and Council said it had completely turned around and was now doing amazing thanks to Tourism Director, Patti Price-Love and Farmer's Market Manager, Jordan Shaw.

#### CITIZEN COMMENTS (Limited to 3 minutes per person)

- David Hankley, Commissioner of Revenue addressed the following topics:
  - Unpaid parking fines and unpaid personal property taxes could be reported to the DMV which would issue "stops" so their tags could not be renewed until paid.
  - Discussed the issue of high assessed values creating numerous citizen complaints across the state on their personal property taxes. Discussion included possible refunds if taxes were sent out first or levy adjustments prior to billing.
  - Councilman Larrowe asked Mr. Hankley for data of the assessed values for the last three years to determine where we stand regarding this subject.

With no further business or comments, Vice Mayor White 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 8:20 p.m.

  
 Mayor

  
 Clerk