

Galax City Council
Minutes
February 13, 2023

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber area on February 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:04 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 Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Councilman Haynes and Councilwoman Ritchie, requested to join the meeting via phone. Mayor Greene asked each one the reason for their absence and where they were located. He approved their request to join.

Mayor Greene gave the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES *See last page***

Keith Barker informed Council that the January 23 meeting minutes were not complete, and would need to be held over for approval at the March 13 meeting. Councilman Henck requested that the approval of all of the minutes on the agenda to be moved to the end of the meeting so he would have time to review the revisions. There was a general consensus to approve the request.

- Regular Meeting of January 9, 2023
- Called Meeting of January 19, 2023
- Called Meeting of February 3, 2023
- Joint Meeting with Galax School Board of February 7, 2023

SPECIAL ACTION

- **Employee Recognition, Melissa Payne, Library Technology Assistant, Galax Public Library** – Ms. Payne was recognized as an outstanding City of Galax employee. Mr. Barker presented a certificate of appreciation.
- **Dick Cooley, Foothills Corvette Club (Wilkesboro, NC), Check Presentation to Galax Police Department** – Mr. Cooley presented a \$500 check to the GPD for implementing the Alzheimer's program that the Galax Fire Department had previously managed. The program assists by providing wristbands (and battery maintenance) to Alzheimer's patients for safety purposes.

OLD BUSINESS

Galax Police Department, Police First Run Vehicle Leases

Keith Barker reminded Council the GPD leases their four (4) first run police cars (all-wheel drive Dodge Chargers) from Enterprise Fleet. He explained the original lease was approved in 2019, with the intent of obtaining four (4) new vehicles in 2022. Ford Explorers were ordered, but Ford did not build enough vehicles in 2022 and cut orders off before our lease was to be renewed. The first runs cars now have mileage ranges of 101,000 to 142,000. He said Council did budget for a

new lease agreement in 2023, and vehicles are now ready for delivery. Mr. Barker said he had discussed the leases with Finance Director Judy Taylor-Gallimore and Chief Cooper and recommended that Council consider moving forward with the 48-month lease at \$3,898.76 per month with a 7.9% interest charge. He said that \$64,000 was budgeted for police car leases. Mr. Barker explained if Council did not act on the lease agreement now, these vehicles would be sold to other communities and we would need to wait for others to be delivered.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the lease with Enterprise Fleet as presented and to authorize the City Manager to complete all required lease documents. Councilman Henck seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Larrowe, Councilman Warr, and Councilman Henck.

Felts Park Restroom Project

Keith Barker reminded Council of the approved budget amendment earlier in the fiscal year to provide funding for the renovation of the public restrooms at Felts Park. He explained the intent of the project was to provide year-round restrooms at the park, with a portion of the building being heated. He said the project included ADA compliant restrooms, new fixtures in each restroom, new plumbing supply lines, baby changing stations, new partitions, and heat on the interior 2 restrooms. Bids were more than the amount Council approved in the budget amendment. Mr. Barker explained while the project was set at \$100,000, the low bid received was \$134,900, and this did not include the baby changing stations or toilet partitions (\$34,000), which City staff would purchase and install. He said the total project total was at \$170,000+/- with no contingency line item, which should be set at \$10,000. Mr. Barker explained with the project increase from \$100,000 to \$180,000 (including contingency), Council would need to either amend the project budget or re-budget the project in FY2024. He said that he had discussed the project with Finance Director, Judy Taylor-Gallimore, and recommended the following budget line-item changes if Council would like to proceed:

- *Eliminate line item 10-4-9900-1213 Downtown Restroom Project (\$50,000).*
- *Reduce funding in the line item 10-4-9900-1214 GFD Boiler Replacement Project (\$30,000).*
- *Increase line item 10-4-9900-1215 Renovation & Roof Felts Park Restroom by \$80,000 (\$180,000 total).*

Vice Mayor White made the motion to amend the Felts Park bathroom project budget as recommended. 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. (No public hearing was required since all funds are within the current approved FY2023 City Budget.)

Approval of 2023 Revised Holiday Trash Calendar

Keith Barker informed Council of a request to consider a revision to the 2023 holiday trash calendar. He explained while the intent was to delay pickups on certain holidays until the following week picking up additional trash, the overall concept was not working as expected. The revised calendar, would provide for trash pickup on the day prior or day after a holiday.

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the revised calendar 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.

Galax Water Plant & Wastewater Plant Review

Keith Barker reminded Council of the discussion on how to proceed with the upgrades to the GWTP and a possible change of management with operations. He explained at this point, there were many factors to consider, both financially and operationally. He said it was worth Council considering how other systems had transitioned to a for-profit management company, how rates were addressed, debt service, maintenance, staffing, etc. Mr. Barker made the recommendation that Council consider a more thorough review than staff could provide, either by expanding our current contract with CHA, or by issuing an RFP for services to conduct the study. He had spoken with Doug Hudgins with CHA, and he felt he could add a study to their current agreement as a task order within the current PER study of the GWTP, and to be completed in a reasonable time for Council's consideration. Mr. Barker said if Council chose to issue an RFP, at a minimum, there would be approximately 60 days before someone was brought on-board to begin the study. He closed by saying if Council chose to proceed with a study, we could work to define terms with CHA, or could work to develop an RFP for advertisement and review.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to add a task order to incorporate with the current contract with CHA so we can move forward more rapidly. 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.

Galax Water Treatment Plant, Virginia Office of Drinking Water Loan

Keith Barker informed Council that the Virginia Office of Drinking Water had contacted our offices and provided a proposal with loan options for the engineering design of the GWTP. He explained the loans as presented had 20-year or 30-year options, with rates set depending on the 20- and 30-year market rate the month before the loan closes. He said the overall loan was for \$3,000,000 with \$2,340,000 being forgiven; or a final loan on of \$660,000 for the selected term (78% principal forgiveness, 22% loan). A copy of the acceptance letter was provided for Council's review. Mr. Barker further explained in order to proceed with the design loan, City Council would need to approve the loan and proceed with the design of the GWTP. He said in discussing with Ms. Judy Taylor-Gallimore, Director of Finance, we would recommend the 20-year loan option, which would have an annual payment of approximately \$40,000.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the proposed loan with the 20-year option and authorize the City Manager to sign all necessary documents. 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.

NEW BUSINESS

Nichole Hair, Executive Director – Mount Rogers Regional Partnership

Ms. Hair gave an update from the Mount Rogers Regional Partnership (MRRP). She explained how MRRP provides economic development services to Galax, Grayson, Carroll, Bland, Smyth and Wythe counties; and also provides management services for BRCEDA. MRRP also plays a vital role and is our direct line to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Galax participates with MRRP and provides funding for their operations.

Appalachian Natural Gas

Keith Barker informed Council that he had met with staff from Appalachian Natural Gas (ANG) on Feb. 2 concerning studies that were underway for bringing natural gas to Galax. He explained they were on this side of I-77 at this time, but it would still be 9 or 10 miles to bring a line to Galax. They were currently surveying some larger local companies that had expressed interest in natural gas. Mr. Barker spoke with our city attorney and ANG may no longer have the franchise for Galax, however they would be the best alternative to bring natural gas to our community. He added that a request to the SCC for a new or renewed franchise agreement may require support from Galax City Council at a later date. ANG staff offered to be present at the March 2023 Council meeting to give an overview of their plans.

There was a Council consensus for ANG representatives to attend the March Council meeting.

Aaron Sizemore, MRPDC

Mr. Sizemore was present and gave an update and overview of the MRPDC. He explained how MRPDC provides services for communities they serve ranging from manager services, planning services, grant management, grant writing, etc.

Jenny Koselak, Willing Partners

Ms. Koselak the new director for Willing Partners introduced herself and gave an overview of Willing Partners and the services they provide to our community.

Mary Ellen Vaught, PAWS Program

Ms. Vaught was present and discussed the PAWS (Pet Wellness Adoption Strategy) Program and their partnership with the Animal Shelter and local veterinarians. She explained how the program provides funding to make up the difference in costs for spay/neuter procedures and what was collected in adoption fees. Ms. Vaught requested consideration of each locality to budget \$10,000 (\$30,000 total) towards the program for its ongoing success.

Adrienne Norman, Galax Environmental Program Manager - VDOT Projects Update

Ms. Norman gave an overview of VDOT projects the City was currently working on. She spoke specifically on the Food City Traffic Signal, and requested Council's approval of a resolution concerning Project UPC 117172 Main St. and Calhoun St. Stormwater Improvements.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the resolution for UPC 117172 Main St. and Calhoun St. Stormwater Improvements. 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.

Jolena Young, Grants Administrator – Crosswalk Project at New River Trail

Ms. Young gave an overview of a possible VDOT grant that could install a crosswalk across E. Stuart Drive and connect the NRT to T. George Vaughan Road. Ms. Young explained as Council, the IDA, and the Vaughan Restoration Group progress through the possible redevelopment of the former furniture plant, connection to the NRT would be critical for attracting visitors to the amenities that may be offered. She said the grant was in the early phases, with no real cost development at this time. Two (2) public hearings would be required before a May 2023 application. Ms. Young requested at this time that city staff be allowed to move forward with the application & planning with VDOT staff, and that the first public hearing be authorized for the March City Council meeting.

Councilman Henck made the motion to authorize the continued planning with VDOT and to set the required public hearing for March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM. 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.

School Board Appointment

Keith Barker informed Council that Mr. Larry Spangler’s term on the Galax School Board would expire in June 2023. He indicated with Council’s permission, we would solicit letters from prospective candidates for the appointment, bring those back to the March meeting. He said the public hearing date (per Code of Virginia § 22.1-29) would be determined at the March meeting. The appointment would occur in May or June.

There was a consensus by Council to authorize the advertising to solicit letters of interest from possible candidates.

Petition to Circuit Court for Special Election

Keith Barker informed Council with the retirement of the Commissioner of Revenue (COR) David Hankley in 2022, and the subsequent appointment of Rene Funk as COR, the City must petition the circuit court in order to hold a special election in November 2023 for that position. .

Councilman Henck made the motion to direct the City Attorney to petition the circuit court to allow a special election for the election of the Galax Commissioner of Revenue in November 2023. 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.

VA Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services Resolution

Keith Barker informed Council of a request to approve a resolution opposing the relocation of the VA Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services from Wytheville to Blacksburg. He said the request came from the Grayson County Board of Supervisors since the current office provided timely services to farmers and businesses in Grayson County.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve the resolution 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.

Acting City Manager Appointments

Council was asked to appoint the Acting City Manager, Keith Barker, as the Clerk of Council in the absence of Mr. Moore; and to all other boards that Mr. Moore currently was appointed to on behalf of Council and the City.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to appoint Mr. Keith Barker as Clerk of Council and other boards Mr. Barry Moore represented City Council on. 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.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Ms. Gail Dutchess

- Discussed her appreciation of organizations serving the Galax area.
- Thanked Councilman Henck's assistance in getting a safety concern resolved for students were walking to and from school.
- Downtown Galax trees were briefly discussed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES *Moved to the end per Council's request***

Regular Meeting of January 9, 2023

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to approve. 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 January 19, 2023

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve. Councilman Larrowe seconded the motion, and 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 due to not being present at the 1-19-23 meeting.

Called Meeting of February 3, 2023

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve. 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.

Joint Meeting with Galax School Board of February 7, 2023

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

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER, MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Keith Barker

- Mr. Barker has been working on the Council packet, answering emails letting everyone know Mr. Moore wasn't available, and was impressed by staff and how they're doing. He was open to answer any questions from Council.

Councilman Larrowe

- Requested the City Manager to notify the IDA to move forward with their action regarding the Vaughan Project.
- VDOT Projects – provide a news release to share with the citizens of Galax.

Vice Mayor White

- Working with our high school students to get them involved in local government.
- Some students interested in politics – inviting them to our meetings.

- Marketing students invited to participate to the next tourism-marketing campaign presentation once it gets going for real life applications.

Councilman Warr

- Canceled the next Downtown Tourism Committee meeting
- Marketing Group to rebrand the City of Galax getting close to being ready to meet with everyone.

Mayor Greene

- Informed Council the VML President Jill Carson had passed away. He attended the funeral and expressed his condolences.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:05 p.m. Vice Mayor White made the motion to enter into closed session under the following Code of Virginia categories:

- **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.
- **Acquisition or Disposition of Real Property § 2.2-3711 A.3 of the Code of Virginia** - Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.
- **Economic Development § 2.2-3711 A.5 of the Code of Virginia** - Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community.
- **Legal Matters § 2.2-3711 A.7 of the Code of Virginia** - Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body; and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

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.

At 9:45 Councilman Larrowe made the motion to reconvene in open session. Councilman Warr seconded the motion. 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 White, Councilman Haynes, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Larrowe, and Councilman Henck.

Councilman Larrowe made the motion to pay the City Manager, Barry N. Moore through 3-31-2023 against future earned PTO. 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.

Councilman Henck made the motion to adjourn at 9:45 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 at 9:45 p.m.

Willie T. Greene, Jr.
Mayor

Karl E. [Signature]
Clerk