

**November  
2023**

## Introduction

This Newsletter is to give you an overview of the activities and discussions of council, along with the status of various projects and initiatives that are underway with the city. The intent is to be as transparent as possible.

## Vision

"Galax is a vibrant, diverse, friendly, citizen engaged community that pursues a culture of excellence."

## Mission Statement

"The city provides high quality public services to sustain an excellent community in which to live, work and play."

# A Minute with the Mayor



*As we embrace a new month, let's foster unity and progress together. Your resilience and community spirit continue to make Galax a shining star in our galaxy. Here is to a month filled with shared achievements and collective growth.*

*Best regards,*

**Willie T. Greene, Sr.**  
**Mayor of Galax**

## November City Council Meeting 11/13/2023

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

### PUBLIC HEARING(S)

1. Public Hearing to Consider Amendments to the FY24 City Budget - **Approved**

### Old Business

2. Consideration of Adoption of Ordinance Authorizing Issuance of up to \$3,000,000 General Obligation and Water and Sewer Revenue Bond - **Passed**

3. Recap of November 9, 2023 Work Session

4. Review of Small Area Plan Schedule - **Passed**

### NEW BUSINESS

5. Discussion on Appointment to Fill the Council Vacancy of Travis Haynes - **To advertise**

6. Request to Solicit Responses for Engineering Term Contracts - **Passed**

7. Request to Schedule Public Hearing on Stormwater Utility Fees - **Approved- Set for December 5, 2023**

8. VDOT-Related Project Updates - Approve a Notice to Award to lowest bidder for McArthur Street and West Stuart Drive Sidewalk Project - **Passed**

9. Downtown Planning and Revitalization Projects -  
**a) Request to issue RFP for Downtown Master Planning - Passed**

**b) Main Street Request for Council Representation and Involvement - Appointed Evan Henck**

**c) Potential DHR Grant for Rex Theater- Approved Staff preparing an application**  
**d) Request to Apply for VDOT SGR Paving Grant for East Stuart Drive- Approved Staff preparing an application**

**e) Request to Apply for \$180,000 in DCR funding for Community Flood Preparedness along with 10% local match - Passed**

**f) Application for Commercial Historic Registration Extension - Information only**

**g) Update on Rosenwald Felts Nomination- Information only**

**h) Eastview Housing Rehabilitation-Information only**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS** (Limited to 3 minutes per speaker or 5 minutes per group)

- Shane Coomes spoke concerning the stormwater fees.

### COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER BURNETTE

#### Council Work Session Recap

City Manager noted that Council had an open and frank discussion of current efforts to revitalize the City during their recent Work Session. Council focused mainly on how to:

1. increase communications with citizens
2. better utilize City property
3. increase parking downtown
4. address interest in increased recreational opportunities within the City (pickleball, BMX, and renovated skateboarding)
5. provide better project status updates to Council & citizens
6. create a pilot development project in downtown to show what can be accomplished

## Updates from the City's Tourism Department

\*This year's Old Time Appalachian Christmas Festival will be held on December 9<sup>th</sup> from noon-6pm.

\* This year fresh cut trees and garland will be made available for purchase.

\* The Visitor's Center saw 477 visitors from 19 states and 4 countries in October 2023.

\*The Tourism office received a \$10,000 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation to do off-season, out-of-state advertising of the holidays in Galax.

\*A new, part-time Social Media & Marketing Coordinator, Chelsea Estremera, has been hired and is doing a wonderful job.

## Mayor's Meetings

### LOCAL

- City Council Meeting
- Tourism/Downtown Committee meeting
- GFD Meeting
- Social Services CPMT
- Public Safety Meeting
- Combating the Overdose Epidemic
- State and Local Officials Webinar
- Appalachian History Initiative
- God's Storehouse
- Appalachian History Initiative
- God's Storehouse Groundbreaking
- Walmart Grand Opening
- City Council Work session
- Joint Meeting w/Council and Planning

### STATE

- CSA Conference
- Mayor's Conference
- VML Conference

## Consideration of Adoption of Ordinance Authorizing Issuance of up to \$3,000,000 General Obligation and Water and Sewer Revenue Bond –

The City has been approved by the Virginia Department of Health for funding from the Virginia Water Supply Revolving Fund to pay for engineering and possibly construction of parts of a large City water system capital improvement project. This project may include construction of a new water treatment plant, new storage tank, and renewal of several pump stations, among other water system related items. The funding package consists of two components – a traditional loan in the amount of \$660,000 and what is referred to as a "principal forgiveness loan" (essentially a grant) in the amount of \$2,340,000. The \$660,000 traditional loan will have to be paid back with interest at the annual rate of 3.25%, but the \$2,340,000 principal forgiveness amount will not have to be paid back as long as those funds are spent on the project in accordance with approved plans. The funding program is administered by the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA), and in order to participate the City is required to enter into agreements with VRA and issue what is referred to as a general obligation and water and sewer revenue bond to VRA in the principal amount of \$660,000. In issuing the bond, the City promises to pay back the \$660,000 loan from funds available in the City's water and sewer enterprise fund and/or the City's general fund. This project was brought forward at the Council's October 19, 2023 and a public hearing was held as required. The project was tabled at that time to be brought back at the November 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. **City Council adopted the ordinance**

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## Request to Schedule Public Hearing on

**Stormwater Utility Fees** – Ms. Adrienne Norman reviewed the current stormwater utility fees, how they are calculated, and how citizens are currently charged. The stormwater utility fee is an imposed

tax on all parcels within City limits, in which fee rates are based upon an equivalent residential unit (ERU). An ERU is approximated to 4,700 square feet of impervious area, which includes all buildings, structures and other impervious surfaces which contribute to stormwater runoff. The City charges this fee to help defer some of the cost of building and maintaining the City's stormwater management infrastructure. It has been noted that even parcels that remain entirely natural and produce no non-natural stormwater are charged the fee due to the definition and rate calculation chart. Staff requested that the Council approve setting a public hearing date of December 11, 2023 to hear public comment regarding amending the stormwater utility fee ordinance to reflect that undeveloped parcels with zero (0) square footage of impervious surface and that do not contribute to runoff be exempt from the fee. **Council approved scheduling the public hearing.**

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## McArthur Street and West Stuart Drive Sidewalk Improvements Project

– Ms. Adrienne Norman requested Council to approve a Notice to Award to the lowest bidder for the McArthur Street and West Stuart Drive Sidewalk Improvements Project. The City has officially received the additional funding that was requested in order to construct and replace the full stormwater pipe and the sidewalks as originally proposed. The sidewalk improvements will begin at Parkwood Drive and continue up McArthur Street to the stop sign where there is an added pedestrian crosswalk, and then the sidewalk improvements will continue past the nursing home and end at the block meeting Murphy Street.

**Council Approved**

# Projects and Proposals at a Glance



## Potential DHR Grant for Rex Theater

The goal of the subgrant program is to fund approximately three (3) historic building rehabilitation projects in the region at approximately \$200,000 each. Buildings eligible for these funds must be listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places and must be owned by a public entity or non-profit organization. Eligible subgrant projects will involve buildings with a public function, including, but not limited to, museums, theaters, and historic sites. Council authorized Staff to develop an application for potential renovations to the Rex Theater.



## Request to Apply for VDOT SGR Paving Grant for East Stuart Drive

This grant opportunity from VDOT would provide funding for deteriorated pavement. This year's list includes two segments of Stuart Drive. No match is required. Council authorized Staff to develop and submit an SGR Paving application to VDOT.

## GOOD TO KNOW Engineering Term Contracts

### Request to Solicit Responses for Engineering Term Contracts

In 2017, the City advertised for term contracts for engineering services. The contracts were for an initial two-year period with two potential extensions of two years each. The term contracts have now expired and Staff recommends moving to advertise for new term contracts as quickly as possible. Term contracts allow public bodies to "pre-approve" qualified firms so that the City can quickly award contracts up to a certain size without having to go through a lengthy procurement process. The term contract process is, in reality, the normal procurement process but allows it to be done once rather for each project that comes up. This allows Staff to shave weeks or even months off the time it takes to do projects. City Council approved the advertisement for letters of interest from engineers for potential term contracts.

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