

February 2024

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



HAPPY
Valentine's Day

Subject: A Heartfelt Valentine's Day Message for Our Beloved Citizens

As we celebrate the month of love, I want to take a moment to extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you on this special Valentine's Day. It is with great joy and affection that I express my love for our incredible community.

Our little city holds a unique place in my heart, and I am grateful to be part of such a close-knit and vibrant community. The sense of unity and camaraderie that defines Galax is truly something special. As we navigate the challenges and triumphs together, our bonds grow stronger, making our city a wonderful place to call home.

In the spirit of Valentine's Day, let us appreciate the love and kindness that surround us daily. Whether it's the friendly smiles on our neighbors' faces, the support we offer one another, or the shared pride in our community's achievements, these are the threads that are woven together to make the fabric of our city.

May this Valentine's Day be a reminder of the love we have for our community and the people who make it so extraordinary. Let us continue to nurture and cherish the connections that make Galax a truly special place.

Wishing you all a day, a month, and a year filled with love, joy, and a deep appreciation for the wonderful community we call home.

With heartfelt affection,

Willie T. Greene, Sr
Mayor
City of Galax



February City Council Meeting 2/12/2024

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

NEW OFFICERS SWORN IN

Three new police officers, Julian Wingfield, David Rose, and Candace Alphin have qualified and were sworn in in front of City Council and the public.

RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT TIM HILL (PUBLIC WORKS)

Tim Hill is retiring and was honored for his nearly 29 years of service.

OLD BUSINESS

High Country Lights Review

Mr. William Bottomly reviewed numbers and reactions from the public for the most recent High Country Lights show held during the Christmas season.

City Financial Review

Mr. Kyle Laux of Davenport & Company presented his firm's findings on the City's current financial health. The City was compared to several other cities and towns of similar size and makeup – our "peer group". On nearly every measure, the City of Galax ranked above the average of our peers. As the City moves forward through the budget process, Davenport will assist in recommending new policies to ensure the strength of the City's financials into the future and will assist in creating a plan to finance the needed repairs to our infrastructure, especially the water treatment plant and water distribution system.

2024-2025 Budget Update

City Manager Michael Burnette provided an update to Council on the current status of the 2024-2025 budget. The Manager's draft of the budget will be presented to Council at their March 11, 2024 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Mount Rogers Regional Partnership Annual Update

MRRP Director Ms. Nichole Hair provided Council with an overview of the economic development activities pursued by her office during the 2023 calendar year and was very positive about the potential for solid economic growth in 2024.

VDH Regional OAA Grant Proposal

Meagan Helmick of the Virginia Department of Health made a proposal for Galax to join other communities in the region to fund a mobile unit that will be available to provide traditional public health services like immunizations and testing of communicable diseases, with the primary focus of the unit being to provide wide-ranging services addressing substance use disorder (SUD).

APPROVED

CSA Funding Shortfall and Budget Amendment Request

Tammy Smith, Director of Social Services, requested a budget amendment of \$148,000 as CSA will be out of funding before the end of the fiscal year.

APPROVED

Overview of 2024 Reassessment

Commissioner of Revenue Funk reviewed the high-level results of the 2024 Galax reassessment. She also reviewed the process and what property owners can do if they disagree with their new valuations.

**See more information at
www.galaxva.com**

Request to Approve 2024 Street Closings

Patti Price-Love, Tourism Director, presented a list of proposed dates that streets in Downtown would be closed for various activities and events.

APPROVED

Update from the Galax-Carroll Regional Library

Library Director Trish Fore gave Council an overview of the library system. She also presented statistics showing the tremendous growth and success of the library over the past year.

Property Maintenance Update

Mr. Joey Davis, the City's new full-time Property Maintenance Official, updated Council on his activities since taking over the role in late 2023. Mr. Davis has been a Virginia Certified Residential Inspector and Property Maintenance Official since 2009. From mid-October 2023 through February 5, 2024, Mr. Davis has opened 163 cases of suspected violations of the City's Property Maintenance code.

February City Council Meeting 2/12/2024 (Continued)

God's Storehouse Construction Update

Jolena Young, the City's Grant Writer, updated Council on the current status of construction at 406 W Oldtown St (future home of God's Storehouse).

Construction continues to move forward at a steady pace. The Virginia Tobacco Commission recently awarded an additional \$74,000 grant to the project for roof replacement.

Historic Registrations Update

Jolena Young updated Council on the current status of a request to add Rosenwald-Felts to the historic register. The nomination has experienced delay due to personnel issues [staffing turnover] in Richmond. Once a resource is in place, Craig Wilson will address comments so the nomination can proceed.

She also discussed the pursuit of an extension of the City's Historic District along Main Street. The project is on hold pending City staff availability and funding to address Department of Historic Resources comments and recommendations on the application.

Request to Schedule a Public Hearing for Smart Scale Projects

Ms. Young noted that every two years, VDOT offers a SMART SCALE grant program for improvements to corridors of significance. For the FY2026 cycle, Staff is working on two proposed applications: first, construction of sidewalk on E. Stuart Drive from the New River Trail State Park to Larkspur Lane and second, construction of a

sidewalk with ADA-compliant intersections on Main Street from Bartlett Street to E Stuart drive. Prior to submission, a public hearing must be held. Staff requested that Council hold a public hearing for this application at its next monthly meeting (March 11th).

APPROVED

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER BURNETTE

The City Manager presented several items for Council's information and decision-making.

Appointment of a Zoning Administrator

Mr. Burnette noted that the City is currently without a formally-approved Zoning Administrator. Per City Code, it is upon Council to name the Zoning Administrator. Staff recommends Building Official Tom Hager to be the named Zoning Administrator until a qualified Planning and Community Development Director is hired.

APPROVED

Advertisement of Public Hearing on Bremmer Rezoning

The Planning Commission has requested that a public hearing be held by the City Council on March 11 to hear public comment on a potential rezone of lots 78-12 and 81-1(A) as requested by Dave Bremmer. This would rezone the property from R-1/M-1 to B-2.

APPROVED

Proposed Change in Oversight of Department of Social Services

Currently, the Department of Social Services is overseen by a one-person Board, namely the City Manager. Local governments are able to change this oversight structure by dismissing the current one-person Board and the current Advisory Board and replacing them with an Administrative Board of five Council-appointed members. Staff requested permission to advertise for letters of interest from citizens to be appointed to this Administrative Board.

APPROVED

Board of Equalization Recommendations

Three volunteers have been secured to potentially make up the Board of Equalization – Jason Bowers, Dedra Lineberry, and Chad Fitzgerald. Council was asked to nominate these people to the Circuit Court for appointment to the Board of Equalization.

APPROVED

Approval of 2024 Trash Collection Schedule

Manager Burnette presented the proposed trash collection schedule and requested approval from Council.

APPROVED –

final trash schedule can be found at www.galaxva.com

RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT – TIM HILL (PUBLIC WORKS)



NEW OFFICERS SWEARING IN Julian Wingfield, David Rose, and Candace Alphin



PROGRESS ON THE MOVE

Current Projects



God's Storehouse Renovations



McArthur & West Stuart Drive



New Guardrail at Felts Park