

A Minute with the Mayor

January
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 New Year's Message from Mayor Greene! I hope this message finds you well as we embark on a brand new year filled with possibilities, growth, and community spirit. I am honored to serve as your Mayor, and I am looking forward to another year of dedicated service to our wonderful city.

I must apologize for the delayed newsletter this month. On January 10th, the day after our recent council meeting, I underwent a knee replacement surgery. I am currently in my second week of physical therapy and, although progress is being made, I am not yet able to resume my regular activities, including driving. I appreciate your understanding and patience during this time. It is my sincere hope to be back on my feet and fully engaged in the coming weeks. In the meantime, please know that our city is in capable hands, and I am working closely with our dedicated team to ensure that the business of our community continues to move forward.

As we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities that 2024 holds, I am confident that with the collective efforts of our exceptional team and the valuable input from you, our citizens, we will make informed decisions that prioritize the well-being and prosperity of our community.

Tough decisions lie ahead, but together, as a united community, I believe we will navigate them successfully. Your input and feedback are invaluable, and I encourage you to stay engaged in the civic process. Our shared commitment to making the right choices for our city will undoubtedly contribute to its continued success.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I am excited about the positive impact we can make together in the year ahead.

Wishing you a prosperous and joyful New Year!

Sincerely,
Willie T. Greene, Sr.
Mayor of the City of Galax

January City Council Meeting 1/8/2024

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

Joint Public Hearing with the Planning Commission

A public hearing was held in conjunction with the Planning Commission regarding amending the City of Galax Comprehensive Plan. The amendments included:

- Land Use
 - Allow for mixed-use/adaptive mixed-use
 - Promote the viability of the downtown
 - Promote more inclusionary land use policies
 - Increase overall resiliency
- Transportation
 - Establishment of a new Urban Development Area, Creekside Small Area Plan, and enhanced downtown and historic district
 - Incorporating more traditional neighborhood design
 - Avoid patterns of induced demand
 - More focus on long-term feasibility of transportation network
 - Increased focus on bicycle and pedestrian

APPROVED

Public Hearing to Consider Amendments to the Stormwater Utility Fee Ordinance

City council heard public comments related to the potential amendment to 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.

APPROVED

Public Hearing to Consider Placement of Blue Line Solutions Cameras in School Zones

REFERRED BACK TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Discussion of Council Meeting Schedule for 2024

Staff presented a draft Council meeting schedule for 2024 that continues the practice of once per month meetings at 6:00PM on the second Monday of each month.

The schedule also accounted for moving the regular meeting from Monday to Tuesday in October and November to miss Columbus Day and Veteran's Day.

APPROVED

Discussion of Holiday Schedule for 2024

The City Manager presented a proposal to follow the state holiday closing schedule for 2024. Most, if not all, localities in the area follow at least the state schedule with some actually approving more holidays than the Commonwealth. The new schedule would differ from past holiday schedules by closing City offices on Columbus Day and Election Day, and a half-day on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

APPROVED

Discussion of Council-Appointed Seats on Various Committees

Council approved a list of Board and Committee appointments for the new year. A full list of those appointed and to which Committee will be posted on the City website soon.

APPROVED

Proposed Adoption of Roberts Rules of Order

The Council has historically adopted and operated by Roberts Rules of Order. Council was asked to adopt Robert's Rules of Order as its code of functioning for calendar year 2024.

APPROVED

OLD BUSINESS

2024-2025 City Budget

The City Manager discussed the upcoming 2024-2025 budget season with Council and presented a draft budget calendar as well as described the upcoming budget process. A budget work session has been scheduled for Tuesday, January 30th from 2:00PM-5:00PM in Council Chambers to allow Staff to hear priorities directly from all members of Council regarding what is desired to be in the initial budget that will be presented to Council.

BUDGET CALENDAR APPROVED

NEW BUSINESS

Request to Approve a VSMP Authority Agreement for the Stuart Drive Development Project

This large multi-faceted development is on property that is bi-sected by the Galax City / Carroll County Line. Because the City acts as the VSMP Authority over other multi-jurisdictional projects, including the Wildwood Commerce Park, Staff requested permission to perform this function for the entire Stuart Drive Development project.

APPROVED

January City Council Meeting 1/8/2024 (Continued)

False Fire Alarm Policy Request

Chief Ayers made a request on behalf of the Galax Volunteer Fire Department that a False Alarm Ordinance be developed for the City of Galax. Since 2019, the calls for service for the department have risen 42% to an average of 500 calls per year. Over the past three years' worth of data, it has been found that 20% of those calls have been false alarms. While a certain amount of false alarms are to be expected and accepted, the lion's share of false alarms are due to 'repeat offenders'. Chief Ayers discussed how the situation is causing safety and morale issues, as well as taking up precious and finite resources. The department requested that some sort of ordinance with a financial penalty be enacted to help persuade some of these firms with multiple false alarms to check and fix their alarm systems rather than leaving it to our volunteers to continue running false alarms.

COUNCIL TOOK THE REQUEST UNDER ADVISEMENT FOR FURTHER STUDY

Request to Apply for Virginia Tourism Grant Funds

Staff requested authorization to apply for a DMO grant of \$20,000 and the Marketing Leverage Plan grant of \$20K from the VTC. The required match for these grants will come out of existing tourism dollars. These grants are for marketing purposes and at least twenty-five percent (25%) has to be spent out of state.

APPROVED

Request to Form Board of Equalization

With the 2024 Reassessment now completed, the Board of Equalization (BOE) must be formed and activated. The Board of Equalization hears from property owners that appeal their new valuations and renders judgement on the proper valuation of each contested parcel. Because of the time-sensitive nature of these proceedings, Council was asked to allow Staff to conduct a search for three persons to be recommended to the Circuit Court judge for appointment to the BOE.

APPROVED

Request to Apply for two Assistance to Firefighters Grants

Staff requested approval to develop and submit two grant applications to the Assistance to Firefighters grant program with a deadline in mid-February 2024. The first is to work with Galax Fire Department Chief Ayers to submit a grant for a Tanker. The second application would be to work with the Galax Grayson EMS Chief Busick to submit a grant for an Ambulance.

APPROVED

Request to Apply for Fire Prevention Safety Grant

Staff requested approval to develop and submit a grant application to the Fire Prevention Safety grant program for a Smoke Trailer to be used regionally for fire safety education.

APPROVED

Request to Apply for VCA Creative Community Partnership Grant

Staff requested approval to develop and submit a grant application to the Virginia Council of the Arts (VCA) for a \$4,500 Creative Community Partnership Grant. If approved, \$2,500 of the funding would go to the Arts Council of the Twin Counties and \$2,000 to the Chestnut Creek School of the Arts.

APPROVED

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER BURNETTE

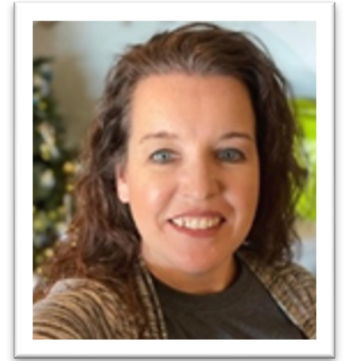
- Felts Park Guardrail – The guardrail that was damaged in an accident during the Fiddler's Convention was replaced that day and looks great.
- Report from new Code Compliance Officer Joey Davis – In the weeks prior to December 18, 2023 there were 39 cases of non-compliance. Of those, fifteen cases remain open with eight having been given notices of violation and seven in progress. Twenty-four have been resolved. From 12/18/2023 through 1/8/2024, there have been 22 cases. Nine have been resolved and thirteen remain open, including one notice of violation.
- Proposed CHA Task #8 PER Contract – Discussion of \$100,000 contract for further water treatment plant design.

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

Greene and White Re-Elected to Lead Council



During the January 8, 2024 Council Meeting, the City Council unanimously selected Mayor Willie Greene to serve another two-year term as mayor. In addition, Councilwoman Beth White was unanimously re-elected to the position of Vice-Mayor for the next two years.



Fun, Fun, Fun, Fun.



And More Fun, Fun, Fun, Fun.

The Old Time Appalachian Christmas Festival



Nothing but LOVE! God's Storehouse Food Giveaway

