

**Galax City Council
Minutes
April 8, 2024**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on April 8, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

At 4:00 p.m. Mayor Greene called the meeting to order with the following Council members present: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

AGENDA REVISION

Mayor Greene requested that the agenda be amended in three areas. First, Emily Edwards was unable to attend this meeting. He asked to let the record show that we had invited her to the May 13th Council meeting. Second, Mayor Greene asked that one of the three items on the second closed session meeting **under VA Code 2.2-3711, (A)(5) Prospective or expansion of business or industry where no previous public announcement has been made**, be moved up to the first closed session at 5:00 p.m. Third, Mayor Greene requested that the CCSA discussion be deleted due to the CCSA Director being absent with an ailing family member.

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the amended agenda as presented. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Bowers

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of March 11, 2024

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 11, 2024. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

FY25 BUDGET WORK SESSION

City Council reviewed and discussed possible changes to the proposed budget prepared by the City Manager for FY2025.

Councilman Henck made the motion to add \$10,000 in funding for one additional blight abatement unit from Fund Balance. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

Councilman Henck made the motion to add one additional pickle ball court to the proposed budget in the amount of \$30,000. Councilman Warr seconded. Vice Mayor White requested that the fourth pickle ball court that was being voted on needed to be in the same area as the other three courts. The motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers. Councilwoman Ritchie abstained.

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve \$40,000 for a fairway mower for the Municipal Golf Course from the Fund Balance. Councilman Warr seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

Councilman Henck made the motion to add \$5,000 to the Galax Fire Dept. Retirement Fund from the operating budget. Councilman Warr seconded. A Council discussion ensued. Councilman Henck amended the original motion to clarify the GFD request was for \$4,000 in addition to the current budgeted amount from the General Fund. The motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers. Mayor Greene abstained.

Councilman Henck left prior to entering into closed session due to a conflict of interest for the first portion of the closed session.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Greene accepted a motion by Councilwoman Ritchie to enter into closed session under the following Codes of Virginia in accordance with 2.2-3711:

(A)(1) Personnel Discussion of appointments to City Boards, Commissions, etc.

(A)(5) Prospective or expansion of business or industry where no previous public announcement has been made.

Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

At 6:10 Mayor Greene accepted a motion from Vice Mayor White to reconvene in open session. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

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, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Galax Maroon Tide Swim Team – Top eight finishers at the VHSL 2024 State Swim Competition were recognized with a Proclamation by Mayor Greene and Council for their achievement, and hard work.

GALAX WATER TREATMENT PLANT AWARD

Mayor Greene recognized Mike Brown, and Jamie Hawkins for earning the 2023 Excellence in Waterworks Operations/Performance Gold Award from the Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Greene announced this was the date and time set by Council for a public hearing for an application filed by Galax Tourism Office requesting approval for installing a 15’ W X 10’ H mural on the building at 101 E Grayson Street. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments. City Manager Burnette informed Council that the “LOVE” sign made of framed fiddles were now in the state of disrepair that was on the side of the Chapters building. The new LOVE sign is larger than the City’s code would allow, special exemption was needed by Council to move forward with the project. Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, spoke briefly about the LOVE Grant. She requested that it be put up before tourism season. With no further comments, the public hearing was closed by Mayor Greene.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the request for the non-conforming sign be allowed to be installed. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

OLD BUSINESS

Council welcomed two new City employees:

- Dennis Jarvis - Main Street Manager / Economic Development Director
- Doug Williams - Planning and Community Development Director

Mayor Greene informed Council of a request to solicit interest for an open seat on Board of Zoning Appeals. The position would fill the remaining term of Doug Williams who was unable to remain on the BZA due to his new position as the Planning and Community Development Director. The remaining term would expire on 6-30-28.

Councilman Bowers made the motion to authorize the City Manager to advertise for letters of interest for the open seat on the BZA. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

District Three Transit Update

Melanie Fleenor, Transportation Director for Mountain Lynx Transit, gave an update on upcoming changes to their service. Their office on Oldtown Street will be moving to the Crossroads Institute on East Stuart Drive this summer. Changes will be made to some of the routes which would include new stops.

False Alarm Policy

Steve Durbin, City Attorney, was present to discuss the proposed False Alarm Policy which was requested by Chief Mike Ayers in January, 2024, on behalf of the Galax Volunteer Fire Department. Mr. Durbin noted the request would be considered an ordinance, not a policy. The request was 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 had been found that 20% of those calls had been false alarms. Chief Ayers said while a certain amount of false alarms is to be expected and accepted, the lion's share of false alarms is due to repeat offenders. Chief Ayers had discussed how the situation was causing safety and morale issues, as well as taking up precious and finite resources. Council directed Staff to work with the City Attorney to propose an ordinance change to address the situation. A proposed policy was presented to Council for discussion.

Councilman Henck made the motion to advertise and hold a public hearing at the May 13 meeting to consider the False Alarm Ordinance. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

Social Services Oversight Change

City Attorney Durbin, walked Council through the appropriate steps to dissolve the current Local Government Official Administrative Board that oversees the Department of Social Services, and the Advisory Board that provides input to the DSS. In these two boards' place, the request included the installation of a new five-member Administrative Board with oversight responsibility and expertise in the field. City Attorney Durbin provided guidance to Council regarding the adoption of the resolution, which included the five names of the DSS Administrative Board members, as well as their terms.

Councilman Henck made the motion to adopt the resolution as proposed. Councilman Bowers seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

NEW BUSINESS

Street Closings for Virginia Main Street Cruise-Ins

Mr. Shane Baker was present to discuss the upcoming season of Cruise-Ins being proposed by the Virginia Main Street organization, and to request the closure of Main Street from Washington Street to Calhoun Street from 3:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. on those dates provided. The events would tie in with the Farmers Market and were expected to include food trucks and live music.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the street closings for the Virginia Main Street Cruise-Ins. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded. the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

Harvest Hosts Request

Councilman Warr provided an overview of the Harvest Hosts concept and discussed with Council the appropriateness of becoming a Harvest Host locality. He explained with approximately 5,600 host locations inside their ever-expanding network, Harvest Hosts, an RV membership program that allows self-contained travelers to overnight at unique locations around the country including farms, wineries, museums, breweries, and more.

There was a Council consensus to move forward and pursue the concept. City Manager Burnette said staff would put together a proposal to include locations.

Virginia Main Street Grant Application

Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, made a request of Council to approve the submission of an application for a \$30,000 VMS Grant. Ms. Young explained the City of Galax and Galax Downtown Association had been invited to submit an application for \$30,000 for strengthening the City’s gateways through beautification and pedestrian amenities. The match would be optional.

USDA Grant

Ms. Young made a second request of Council to approve the submission of an application for a \$25,000 USDA Community Facilities Grant to the United States Department of Agriculture for a Community Facilities Grant to furnish five (5) of the entrepreneurial office spaces at God’s Storehouse, and to purchase wares for the commercial kitchen. If approved, the Council would be asked to adopt a resolution to that effect. The construction expenses would offset the required 1:1 match.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the requests to apply for the VMS Grant, and the USDA Grant. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

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

Mark Van Alstine discussed the speed limit in the City. He said it really concerns him that so many people were driving so fast – well above the 25 mph speed limit. He went on to explain why this issue was so worrisome to him. He said when he was younger, 50 years prior, a child ran out in front of him. He said that he was going less than 25 mph at the time, but nonetheless, he accidentally hit the child, who passed away. He said that he didn’t want this to happen to anyone else.

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

City Manager – No Comments

Jolena Young (Grants)

Reminded everyone of the April 22 – Senator Warner’s Visit, and Galax Downtown/Main Street Association’s Earth Day downtown clean up partnering with the City of Galax Employees.

Councilwoman Burnett

- GGEMS meeting – Discussed budget, large call volumes, and aging equipment

Vice Mayor White

- Spoke at the Chamber of Commerce First Annual Women’s Luncheon.
- May 2 – National Day of Prayer – Meeting at GPD courtyard

Vice Mayor White made the motion to set a public hearing for school board appointments at the May 13th meeting. Councilman Bowers seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers. Councilman Henck abstained from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

- Vice Mayor White informed Council that she and Councilman Bowers would be absent at the June 10th Council meeting.
- Vice Mayor White explained the October Council meeting will conflict with the annual VML Conference. The date would need to be changed.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to set October 7th for the Council meeting instead of October 15th. Councilman Henck seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

Councilwoman Ritchie

- Discussed Tourism related meetings

Councilman Henck

- Discussed Rosenwald Felts Revamped - Juneteenth Day celebration planned
- Public Services Committee meeting on May 23
- Hampton Property
- Request to schedule another budget meeting – Council consensus to discuss after the closed session at the end of the meeting.

Councilman Warr

- Upcoming Tourism meeting on April 9th

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Greene accepted a motion made by Vice Mayor White to enter into closed session under the following Codes of Virginia:

Request for Closed Meeting in Accordance with 2.2-3711

- (A)(1) Personnel Discussion of appointments to City Boards, Commissions, etc.
- (A)(3) Discussion of the acquisition of real property or the disposition of real property

Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

Councilman Henck abstained from the 2.2-3711(A)(1) portion of the Closed Session due to a personal conflict.


At 9:20 p.m., Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to come out of closed session. Councilman Bowers seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

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 affirmation: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

- *Vice Mayor White made the motion to appoint Hunter Bryant as the City of Galax representative on the Twin County Arts Council. Mr. Bryant replaces Dana Woodel who had served for over 10 years on the Council. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.*
- *Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the request for the \$7,000 mobile back stop for Parks & Recreation. Councilman Warr seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.*
- *Councilman Henck made the motion to move \$344,000 from the City’s fund balance to repair/replace sidewalks. With no second to the motion from Council, the topic was tabled.*
- *Councilman Warr made the motion to approve \$8000 for a picnic shelter at the Rosenwald Felts Community Center. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.*

Mayor Greene adjourned the meeting. at 10:00 p.m.


Mayor


Clerk