

April
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



AUTISM
AWARENESS MONTH

Dear Citizens,

As we embrace the beauty of April, let us also seize the opportunity for growth and renewal. This month, let's come together as a community to sow the seeds of positive change and cultivate the spirit of unity.

In April, we celebrate not just the blossoming of flowers, but also the potential for progress in our city. Let's harness this energy to plant the seeds of kindness, compassion, and collaboration in every corner of our city.

As your Mayor, I encourage each and every one of you to take an active role in shaping the future of our community. Whether it's volunteering for a local cause, supporting small businesses, or simply spreading joy through acts of kindness, let's make April a month of meaningful action and connection.

Together, let's make this April a time of growth, resilience, and hope for a brighter tomorrow.

With gratitude and optimism,

Willie

Willie T. Greene, Sr
Mayor
City of Galax



April City Council Meeting 4/8/2024

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

- Council started the meeting off with a short budget work session.
- Council then went into closed session to interview potential school board members.
- Council returned to open session without announcements.

RECOGNITION OF GALAX MAROON TIDE STATE SWIM TEAM TOP 8 FINISHERS

Swimmers and coaches from the State Championships were recognized for their achievement, hard work, and positive impact on our community. This included Top 8 finishers in the 2024 VHSL Class 1A & 2A Combined State Championship Boys & Girls Swimming.



PUBLIC HEARING

An application was filed by the Galax Tourism Office requesting approval to install a 15' wide by 10' high mural on the building at 101 E Grayson Street. Pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2204 and §15.2-2285, the Galax City Council held a public hearing on the application regarding the non-conforming sign proposed to be installed on the building owned by Sharon Ritchie. The Main Street Design and Public Art Committees had approved the art for the mural with a recommendation that the mural be framed. The alternate installation method is to attach the PVC canvas to the wall via small grommets, washers and screws. The new mural will be placed on canvas rather than painted directly on the side of the building. It replaces the former LOVE sign made of fiddles that was taken down due to being in a state of disrepair. Council was asked to approve the non-conforming sign request.

Council approved the request



Approved LOVE Sign

RECOGNITION OF GALAX WATER TREATMENT PLANT AWARD

Water Treatment Plant Staff were recognized for having earned a 2023 Excellence in Waterworks Operations/Performance Award from the Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (ODW).



April City Council Meeting 4/8/2024 (Continued)

Request to Solicit Interest for Open Seat on the Board of Zoning appeals

Due to Mr. Doug Williams' hiring as the new Planning and Community Development Director, he has been forced to resign from the BZA. Therefore, the City needs to advertise for interest from Galax citizens to be appointed to the BZA.

City council was asked to authorize the City Manager to advertise for letters of interest from the public for a seat on the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Request was approved.

Street Closings for Virginia Main Street Cruise-Ins

Mr. Shane Baker discussed the upcoming season of Cruise-Ins being proposed by the Virginia Main Street organization and requested closure of Main Street from Washington Street to Calhoun Street from 3:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. on those dates.

The events will tie in with the Farmers Market and are expected to include food trucks and live music.

Council approved the request

Introduction of new Main Street / Economic Development Director and new Planning and Community Development Director

City Manager Burnette introduced Mr. Dennis Jarvis II (Main Street Manager and Economic Development Director) and Mr. Doug Williams (Planning and Community Development Director) to the Council and welcomed them to the Galax team.



Dennis Jarvis II



Doug Williams

April City Council Meeting 4/8/2024 (Continued)

Grants Submission Authorization

Ms. Jolena Young, Grants Administrator, presented two grant opportunities for Council review and decision. These included:

USDA Grant – Requested that Council approve submission of an application for a \$25,000 USDA Community Facilities Grant to furnish five (5) of the entrepreneurial office spaces at God’s Storehouse and to purchase wares for the commercial kitchen. Construction expenses will offset the required 1:1 match.

Virginia Main Street Grant

Application - Requested that Council approve submission of an application for a \$30,000 VMS grant for strengthening the City’s gateways through beautification and pedestrian amenities. Match is optional.

Council approved the request to submit both applications.

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. With approximately 5,600 host locations inside their ever-expanding network, Harvest Hosts is an RV membership program that allows self-contained travelers to overnight at unique locations around the country including farms, wineries, museums, breweries, and more.

Council approved further study of the issue and potentially the allowance of the use of some City properties for this program.

False Alarm Policy

In January, Fire Chief Mike 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. Council directed Staff to work with the City Attorney to propose an ordinance change to address the situation. City Attorney Steve Durbin was tasked with this work and brought a proposed ordinance to Council for discussion. City council discussed the proposed and determined they would like to hear public comment on the proposal.

Council voted to set a public hearing to discuss the proposed ordinance at the May 13th meeting

Social Services Oversight Change

City Attorney Steve 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 and, in their place, install a new five-member Administrative

Board with oversight responsibility and expertise in the field. City council was asked to take actions as appropriate to properly replace the current DSS oversight structure with the new structure and appoint nominees to fill the five available positions. **Council took the appropriate actions to properly replace the current DSS oversight structure.**

District Three Transit Update

Melanie Fleenor, Director of Transportation for Mountain Lynx Transit, provided the Council with updates related to the operation of the Lynx transit service. They have been working on potential changes to Mountain Lynx Transit’s Galax loops due to their offices moving from downtown to the Crossroads Institute. The changes to the loops are necessary because the current office is a transfer point for the Red and Blue Loops and can no longer be used once they relocate. There will be no changes to the existing demand-response service within the City of Galax. There will be no changes to the hours of service for the Blue and Red Loops. What will change are the routes and schedules for both the Red and Blue Loops. District Three also requested using the Farmer’s Market as a regular stop.

Council approved the request

April City Council Meeting 4/8/2024 (Continued)

APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or autism, is a complex neurological and developmental disorder that affects how a person acts, communicates, learns, and interacts with others. ASD affects the structure and function of the brain and nervous system. Because it affects a child's development, ASD is called a developmental disorder. ASD can last throughout a person's life. People with this disorder have problems with communication, interactions with other people (social skills), restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. Different people with autism can have different symptoms. For this reason, autism is known as a spectrum disorder—a group of disorders with a range of similar features. ASD includes:

- Autistic disorder ("classic" autism). Autistic disorder is often what people think of when they think of autism.
- Asperger syndrome. Asperger syndrome is sometimes said to be a milder version of classic autism, mostly affecting social behaviors. Unlike people with autism, many people with Asperger syndrome have normal or above-average intelligence and language skills.
- Pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS, or "atypical" autism). PDD-NOS includes some, but not all, of the features of classic autism and/or Asperger syndrome. This category also includes childhood disintegrative disorder and Rett syndrome, two conditions in which a child develops normally for several months or years, then loses skills related to language, movement and coordination, and other cognitive functions.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The symptoms of one person with autism can be very different from another's. One person with autism may have mild symptoms, while another may have more serious symptoms, but they both have ASD. Despite the range of possible symptoms, there are certain actions and behaviors that are common. In general, the main signs and symptoms of ASD relate to: communication; social behaviors; and routines or repetitive behaviors, sometimes called stereotyped behaviors.

Communication:

Does not respond to his/her name by 12 months of age	Cannot explain what he/she wants
Language skills are slow to develop or speech is delayed	Doesn't follow directions
Seems to hear sometimes, but not other times	Doesn't point or wave "by-bye"
Used to say a few words or babble, but now does not	

Social Behavior:

Doesn't smile when smiled at	Has poor eye contact
Seems to prefer to play alone	Is very independent for his/her age
Seems to tune people out	

Stereotyped Behavior:

Gets "stuck" doing the same things over and over and can't move on to other things	Shows deep attachment to toys, objects, or routines
Spends a lot of time lining things up or putting things in a certain order	Repeats words or phrases

***This information came from Special Olympics.