

Galax City Council
Special Called Meeting Minutes
April 18, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

Galax City Council convened in a special called meeting in the City Council Chamber on April 18, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

At 4:00 p.m., Mayor Greene called the meeting to order with the following Council persons present and they are as listed: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett. Councilman Warr and Councilman Bowers were absent.

Councilwoman Burnett gave the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

FY2025 School Budget Presentation

Susan Tilley, Galax School Superintendent, gave a presentation of the FY25 Galax School Budget. Highlights of Ms. Tilley's presentation included:

- Good news; things getting better at schools, increasing, and improving
- Enrollment is up to over 1,431 – 29% are not local residents
- Dual Enrollment is up
- Attendance is up
- Diplomas
- Activity participation is up -SPLASH Program
- Three Teacher Prep. Programs
- Tutoring is up
- SOL scores are up
and more!

The three main areas of priority included:

1. Compensation – 3% raise for all Staff
2. New Positions
 - a. Middle School Reading Specialist
 - b. CTE Middle & High School
 - c. English Learner Teacher and Instructional Assistant - Elementary School
3. Resources for fuel, electricity, and water/sewer, and Middle School athletic uniforms

Ms. Tilley requested level funding from Council for another year, and thanked Council for their ongoing support.

FY25 City Budget Presentation

City Manager Burnette thanked staff for their assistance with the FY25 Budget preparation. Next steps include Public Hearing on May 6th, with final adoption on May 13th. Highlights of City Manager Burnette's presentation, and Council discussion included the following:

- Budget initiatives per Council's direction:
 - Use of available revenue to pursue tourism and Economic Development
 - Make Galax an employer of choice in the region;

- Holding the line and pushing back on benefit cost increases for employees
 - Making improvements providing COLA adjustments across the board
 - Make Galax more attraction for new employees
- Creating a formal Capital Improvement Plan for better capital budgeting
- Re-charge and grow the Rex Theater
- Enhancing Citizen Safety
- No use of Fund Balance to balance the operational budget this year other than \$30K for an additional CIP project for a Pickle Ball court
- No water/sewer/trash rate increase
- No increase in tax rates
- Re-assessment did raise real estate values
- Council directed to lower tax rate from \$1.00 per \$100 to .92
- Very limited use of General Fund to cover water/sewer operations. \$86K used to cover, close to breaking even
- Real Estate tax bills increasing, Council determined reduced new tax revenue by 1/3 to give back to residents hit by higher tax bills
- Overall, a conservative budget that attempts to address employee needs, Council wishes, and community growth
- Revenue positives & negatives were discussed
- Revenue is declining in sewer revenues, state highway funds decreasing, after Covid funds stopped.
- Personnel – several new positions were created
- Overall solution needed within the budget for janitorial needs
- Issues with Succession Planning – extra money needed
- Vehicle replacement discussion

City Manager Burnette closed by informing Council that it was now their decision to make any final revisions to the budget. He requested the following of Council:

- Authorize staff to advertise the proposed tax rate, and the City & School Budgets for public hearing.
- Authorize to set a special called Council meeting on Monday, May 6th at 6:00 p.m. to have and to hold the public hearings for the proposed tax rate, and the City & School Budgets.
- Adoption or revision of proposed budgets and the setting of the tax rates for 2024-2025 at the regular meeting on May 13th at 6:00 p.m.

Council discussion included:

- Portable backstop for Galax Parks & Recreation ball field; Council consensus to table the purchase
- Issues of balls hitting walkers on the track
- Pickleball Courts
- Need for practice fields
- Van costs for Rec. Center
- GPD issues of hiring officers
- Parking & speed enforcement on Main Street and Downtown
- Mobile Showers for Felts Park discussed
- Salary study discussion

- Councilman Henck informed Council of an upcoming contract with his office the Grayson Co. Commonwealth's Office, to prosecute misdemeanor cases for Grayson, Carroll, and Galax at large savings compared to the previous attorney's office, Sands Anderson with a savings to the City of approximately \$50,000 per year. Councilman Henck explained that he had never received any of the funds, but in the future, should that change, he requested that this line item be voted on separately by Council, so there wouldn't be a possible conflict.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to set a public hearing on May 6th at 6:00 p.m. regarding the City and School Budgets. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to advertise the budget at the .92 tax rate with all other tax rates remaining the same. Councilman Henck seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

New Business

- Capital Improvement Plan and projects were discussed
- Regional Radio Interoperability Funds

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the spending of the Interoperability Funds in the amount of \$210,200 to fund three Capital Funding Projects including three projects including mobile showers, repaving project, and Rex Theater balcony project. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

At 7:35 p.m., Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:35 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk

