

May
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



Dear Citizens,

Welcome to the month of May! As the days grow warmer and our city blossoms with the vibrant energy of spring, I'm delighted to share some exciting updates and good news from our community.

First and foremost, I'm pleased to announce that our city has achieved a balanced budget for the fiscal year. This accomplishment reflects our collective commitment to responsible financial management and ensures that we can continue to invest in the services and infrastructure that make our city a wonderful place to live.

Additionally, several new projects are underway that promise to enhance our quality of life. From VDOT Construction Projects to new community programs and local business initiatives, and the new Main Street Façade program. There's a lot to look forward to in the coming months. Our efforts to improve public safety, support education, and promote sustainability are also yielding positive results.

I encourage you to stay engaged and participate in the various events and activities planned throughout May. Whether it's a community clean-up, a local farmers' market, or a neighborhood festival, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement in our community. Together, we are making great strides and building a brighter future for all. Wishing you a joyful and prosperous May!
Warm regards,

Willie

Willie T. Greene, Sr
Mayor
City of Galax

May City Council Meeting 5/13/2024

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

Mayor Greene started the meeting off with a special **RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT**

- Mr. Randy Butcher – City Electrician (Maintenance Department) –
Dates of Service: 03/05/2001 – 05/31/2024 (23 years 2 months)
- Ms. Sandra Vuurmans - Benefits Programs Specialist II (Social Services)
Dates of Service: 11/21/2011 – 05/31/2024 (12 years 6 months)

PUBLIC HEARING - APPLICANTS FOR APPOINTMENT TO GALAX SCHOOL BOARD –

The Galax City Council held a Public Hearing. The purpose of the Public Hearing was to receive public comments regarding nominees or applicants to the School Board to fill two seats.

-Leah Henke

-Brett Sexton

-Jealynn Liddle Coleman

The term of office for these positions is three years with the term commencing on July 1, 2024. After the Public Hearing, council voted to re-appoint Leah Henke and Brett Sexton to the school Board.

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED REAL PROPERTY TAX INCREASE FOR FY2025

The City of Galax proposes to increase property tax levies.

1. Assessment Increase: Total assessed value of real property, excluding additional assessments due to new construction or improvements to property, exceeds last year's total assessed value of real property by 33%.

2. Lowered Rate Necessary to Offset Increased Assessment: The tax rate which would levy the same amount of real estate tax as last year, when multiplied by the new total assessed value of real estate with the exclusions mentioned above, would be \$0.75 per \$100 of assessed value rate. This rate will be known as the "lowered tax rate."

3. Effective Rate Increase: The City of Galax proposes to adopt a tax rate of \$0.92 per \$100 of assessed value. The difference between the lowered tax rate and the proposed rate would be \$0.17 per \$100, or 22.2 percent. This difference will be known as the "effective tax rate increase."

Individual property taxes may, however, increase at a percentage greater than or less than the above percentage.

4. Proposed Total Budget Increase: Based on the proposed real property tax rate and changes in other revenues, the total budget of City of Galax will exceed last year's by 15.5 percent.

Council adopted the proposed budget related to this public hearing.

OLD BUSINESS

• Food Vendor Temporary Business License

– Commissioner of Revenue Rene Funk – discussed a Staff proposal to implement a new Temporary Business License for Food Vendors (i.e. Food Trucks) doing business in the City, especially those that only operate in the City a few times per year. Currently, a food vendor is required to have a business

license to operate in the City at an annual cost of \$200. For vendors that only come to one or two events in a given year, this requirement is burdensome and causes many vendors to decline to set up at events and at the farmer's market. Staff is proposing to create a Temporary Business License for food vendors that would cost \$25 and would allow them to operate for up to seven (7) consecutive days. Each time they come to do business in the City, they would be required to get a new \$25 temporary permit. They would also have the option at any time to purchase the normal annual permit. It is hoped that this change will encourage more food vendors to operate at our events and that this will, in turn, increase meals tax revenues.

City council approved the proposal from Commissioner Funk and staff.

Proposed FY2025 City Budget Adoption

City Manager Burnette – Staff and Council have worked diligently over the past several months to put forward a strong budget proposal to guide the City into the future. Council has heard from the public in various meetings, public hearings, and through other communications. The final proposed budget for the 2024-2025 budget year is \$38,602,717.

City council adopted the proposed FY2025 City budget as presented.

May City Council Meeting 5/13/2024 (Continued)

• VDOT Construction Projects Update –

Adrienne Norman, Environmental Project Manager – Mrs. Norman provided an update on the construction projects that are currently partially or fully funded by the Virginia Department of Transportation. She discussed the projected cost, the phasing schedules, and the anticipated start dates for each project.

City council thanked Adrienne for a great job of presenting the update and told her to continue the great work that she is doing for the city.

NEW BUSINESS

• PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulations –

Mike Brown, Chief Operator of the Galax Water Treatment Plant discussed the origins of rules and regulations related to Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), specifically the Maximum Contaminant Level Goal [MCLG] and Maximum Contaminant Level [MCL], along with the findings from City tests regarding PFAS limits for five individuals, as set by the EPA. PFAS are human-made chemicals that do not occur naturally in the environment. Currently, there are thousands of chemicals that are considered PFAS and have been widely used in consumer, commercial, and industrial products since the 1950s. Many PFAS break down very slowly in the environment.

City council thanked Mike for a great job of presenting the update and told to him continue the great work that he is doing for the city.

• Street Closing Request for Twin County Humane Society

The Twin County Humane Society is again sponsoring a free Spay/Neuter clinic for the community from Wednesday, May 15 through Saturday, May 18. This clinic will follow the same format as last year. The TCHS is requesting permission to close off the portion of Matthews Street that runs between Meadow Street and Givens Street to park the portable clinic trucks during this four-day event. This road closing does not affect any residences or businesses.

Council approved the request.

• Street Closing Request for Freedom Firm USA –

Freedom Firm USA, a local non-profit focused on raising awareness and funds for anti-trafficking work in India, will be hosting the India national director during a visit to the U.S. They are planning to organize a trafficking awareness event at Center 2:42 off of Main Street on Thursday evening, August 29th with a walk/run event, food truck, awareness display, and question and answer time with the India national director. They plan to have runners and walkers start at Center 2:42, cross Bartlett Street and enter the Felts Park walking track utilizing Edward Street. The request is to approve the closure of Edward Street for a few hours during the evening of August 29, 2024.

Council approved the request.

• Main Street Façade Program Review –

Dennis Jarvis, II, Director of Economic Development and Main Street – discussed the new Main Street Façade program. The Galax Main Street façade improvement grant program was created in partnership with a grant program from Virginia Main Street. Galax Grows was granted \$50,000 to launch the program, with \$41,000 for direct investment and \$9,000 for the grant administration/management. The Galax Main Street board voted to include the \$9,000 back to the program to add additional opportunities for façade improvements. This project will provide matching grants ranging on a dollar-for-dollar basis in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$8,000 to assist downtown businesses along designated areas in the City of Galax with building façade rehabilitation and other general property improvements undertaken in accordance with established design guidelines. The design guidelines address architecture, signage, landscaping, walls, lighting, veneers, awnings, etc. City council heard the presentation and asked questions related to the new program.

City council thanked Dennis for a great job of presenting the update and told to him continue the great work that he is doing for the city.

May City Council Meeting 5/13/2024 (Continued)

• **Grants and Grants-Related Requests** – Jolena Young, Grants Administrator presented several grant opportunities for Council review and decision. These included:

**a) Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
~\$10,000,000+ (100/0)**

Council held public hearings for two VDOT Smart Scale Projects. An application for the installation of sidewalk from Larkspur Lane to Glendale Road. The project would include installation of one or two pedestrian islands to be installed in the turn lane to aid with pedestrian crossing of the busy highway. An application for the installation of ADA ramps, pedestrian signals, and high-visibility crossings along the Main Street corridor from Bartlett Street to Stuart Drive. The project will also include a lane diet to eliminate the left turn lane at Washington Street. The project will result in loss of some parking spaces and trees. However, existing ramps must meet ADA standards for the City to pave the Intersections along Main Street.

The Council adopted resolutions authorizing the City Manager to submit the applications and sign documents related to the project(s).

b) Administration is asking for approval to submit a Grants.Gov application and a COPS application required to receive the \$3,000,000 Regional Congressional Directed Spending Award, and to serve as fiscal agent for the regional grant. This relates to the recent presentation by Senator Warner and Congressman Griffith of funding

for the region's radio communications systems. The City Manager will work with the City Attorney to develop an MOU for the project.

c. Congressional Directed Spending Request for a 1 MG Water Tank - \$3,000,000 (80/20)

Administration is asking for affirmation of the verbal/email approval to submit a \$3,000,000 congressional directed spending request to Senators Warner and Kaine for a 1-million-gallon water tank. The tank will allow the water plant to be shut down for up to 24 hours for repairs. This is a critical component of the Water System Improvement Plan. The grant award would be \$2,400,000 and the City would have to provide \$600,000 in matching funds. CDS is a multiple phase approval process. Gate 1 - The requests are vetted by the Senators who chose a limited number of projects to submit to the annual funding bill. Gate 2 – Requests are reviewed by Senate and House Sub-Committees to be included in a Bill. The Bill must then pass the Senate and House. Gate 3 – The Funding Bill must be adopted by the House and Senate and signed by the President.

d. Department of Historical Resources – Paul Bruhn Southwest Virginia Grant - \$225,000 (100/0)

The Council is asked to approve for Administration to work with the City Attorney to create and record a Preservation Easement for The Rex Theater.

e. Virginia State Homeland Security Program Grant (SHSP) ~\$60,000 (100/0)

Administration, Information Technology Management and Emergency Management are seeking approval to apply for a Virginia State Homeland Security Grant. The project will enable the City to establish an effective and tested disaster recovery plan for critical communication and financial systems. The estimated grant amount is \$60,000: \$45,000 to purchase 4 servers and \$15,000 to engage the auditor to plan and access the disaster recovery plan and to evaluate cybersecurity effectiveness.

f. DHCD Planning Grant -\$50,000 (100/0)

Administration is seeking approval to submit a planning grant with DHCD for a Downtown Revitalization project. The planning grant will assist in a full application next spring.

g. Non-Competitive Grant Applications (100,0)

Administration is seeking approval to submit applications for the following non-competitive grants:

- **\$30,000 Aid to Localities (Fire Department)**
- **~\$10,000 Non-Competitive Litter Grant**
- **\$7,500 Law Enforcement Emergency Management Grant**

City council approved all request.

RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT –
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- Ms. Sandra Vuurmans (Social Services)



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