

**Galax City Council
Minutes
June 10, 2024**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in City Council Chambers on June 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Greene called the meeting to order with the following Council members present: Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett. Vice Mayor White, and Councilman Bowers were absent.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE – Councilwoman Ritchie

RECOGNITION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Mayor Greene presented Ms. Emily Edwards with a proclamation recognizing her accomplishment of earning the title of the 2023 VHSL Class 1A Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field Shotput State Champion. *Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the proclamation as presented. Councilman Henck seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Called Meeting of March 28, 2024
- Called Meeting of April 18, 2024
- Called Meeting of May 6, 2024
- Regular Meeting of May 13, 2024

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the Council meeting minutes for the four meetings. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

WYTHEVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE UPDATE

Dr. Dean Sprinkle, WCC President provided an update on the current trends at Wytheville Community College, and answered questions from Council.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Treatment Plant & Distribution System Discussion

Mr. Stevie Steele - CHA Consulting, provided an update on the review of the City’s water treatment system. He explained after studying the system, a matrix was completed that looked at probable failure points and began to designate those points into priorities and potential projects. This information would help inform Davenport and their work to determine the most economically efficient way to perform the needed improvements. City Manager Burnette summarized the next steps in moving forward regarding the water tank, pump stations, and the financial options available.

Virginia Main Street Update

Dennis Jarvis, II - Economic Development and Main Street Manager, provided an update on several key initiatives. These include the status of the Advancing Application for Virginia Main Street, a review of the comprehensive plan for Galax Grows by Destinations by Design/Galax Grows meetings, and the progress of the Main Street façade program.

False Alarm Policy

Mike Ayers, Galax Fire Chief, presented an updated version of the proposed False Alarm Policy. The reason for this policy was to give the Fire Department enforcement powers to pursue fines against those businesses that have multiple false alarms due to faulty alarm systems. It also would provide a separate protocol that companies may opt into that would allow those with extremely sensitive systems to avoid fees by authorizing emergency response personnel time to contact the company to determine if an alarm was

real, prior to dispatching personnel. Chief Ayers stressed that the GFD loved Galax, and the purposed behind the False Alarm Policy was not to hurt businesses, or gain money, but to protect the volunteer fire fighters from the false alarm calls. He recalled a business where the GFD was dispatched seven times in four days for a leaking pipe that was causing the false alarms. This was a result of the failure to put in a work order by the business to get the issue resolved. Chief Ayers said this wasn't fair.

Councilman Henck made the motion to set a public hearing for the proposed False Alarm Policy Ordinance at the July Council meeting. Councilwoman Burnette seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

GGEMS Ambulance Financing

Judy Taylor-Gallimore, Finance Director discussed the financing of the new ambulance recently approved by the City Council for the Galax-Grayson Emergency Medical Services (GGEMS). At the May 13th meeting, Council approved a lease-purchase financing of the ambulance. The total anticipated cost was to be less than \$300,000. A request for proposals went out to local banks with responses that were due on Thursday, June 6th. Ms. Taylor-Gallimore informed Council that we had received three responses back. First Citizens Bank had the lowest rate at 6.59% for 60 months. Ms. Taylor-Gallimore requested the approval of a resolution for the equipment lease purchase financing and using First Citizens Bank.

Councilwoman Burnett made the motion to approve the request as presented. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief Changes

Michael Burnette, City Manager proposed changes to the income limits and tax relief for the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief program. Due to the increases in reassessment valuations and the decision not to fully equalize the tax rate this year, Council has been concerned about how the new tax bills may impact the elderly and disabled. Therefore, Staff was asked to find ways to provide some relief. The City Manager proposed that the maximum income limits for the program be raised by \$5,000 per tier and the amount of tax relief be increased by \$100 per tier. See chart below. City Manager Burnette explained if supported by Council, a public hearing would need to be held at the July 8th meeting before the initiative could be adopted.

PROPOSED 2024 ELDERLY & DISABLED RELIEF PROGRAM	\$5,000 INCREASE	\$100 INCREASE
	INCOME LIMITS	RELIEF
	\$35,000 (up from \$30k)	\$500 (up from \$400)
	\$40,000 (up from \$35k)	\$400 (up from \$300)
	\$45,000 (up from \$40k)	\$300 (up from \$200)

Councilman Warr made the motion to set a public hearing for public comments for the proposed ordinance change for elderly and disabled tax relief. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

Mobile Command Center

Police Chief Cooper informed Council of the need of a new or refurbished mobile command center for the Galax Police Department. The existing mobile command center was acquired by the Galax Fire Department as surplus from Radford University for \$25,000. The unit was originally designed as a mobile medical clinic. The Fire Department and Police Department collaborated on possible uses of the unit and determined converting it to a mobile command center would be the most beneficial. The Galax Police Department obtained a \$20,000 grant in 2010 to convert the unit for use as a mobile command center. With the improvements made the total investment was \$45,000.

The unit has been used at street festivals, the fiddler's convention, the Hillsville Flea Market, during searches for lost persons, during bomb threats, the 100+ vehicle crash on I-77, to process

crime scenes and also as a backup for dispatch during the police department's remodel. It provides a place where responders can coordinate their operations, complete reports, dispatch responders and provides a noticeable location for the public to seek assistance during events. Chief Cooper explained the current unit was in need of repairs for roof leaks, water damage, outdated equipment, faded & peeling graphics, etc. Staff obtained estimates for a comparable unit to what we currently have. The cost starts at \$750,000 with no restroom, camera system, radios, computers, or displays. A rough estimate of \$54,000 was obtained from a repair facility to make the repairs needed. The request also included the need for a shelter to park the unit. Chief Cooper closed by explaining that once he received the final details of the grant, he will share with City Manager Burnette. Chief Cooper was seeking authorization to move forward with applying for the grant.

Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to approve the request to move forward in obtaining details and apply for a grant. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Alan Dickerson – Budget comments/concerns

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

City Manager Burnette

- New LOVE sign now in place on Main Street
- Requested to replace Ms. Dana Sworsy as the Planning Commission Representative on the Executive Board of the MRPDC with Ms. Leesa Gayheart.

Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to appoint Ms. Gayheart. Councilman Henck seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

- Trees coming down on Main & Center Streets. Video by Adrienne Norman created so public will understand the project. Seven trees in all to come down due to moving forward with the VDOT project.
- VML Policy Committee Nominations from Council
 - Human Development & Education Committee –Nomination for Mayor Greene
- Brightspeed – Major overhaul of telecommunications in Galax by overlaying fiber over the copper.
- Opportunity to apply for a grant for new Rex Theater lights & sound through a Twin County Foundation Grant.

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the request as presented. Councilman Warr seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

Councilwoman Burnett

- Street light request
- ATM at Felts Park – Consensus to get ATM at Recreation Center
- Requested that ID badges be made for Council
- Galax Fire Dept. Duck Race tickets for sale now

Councilwoman Ritchie

- Eastview Housing Project – Two houses ready for project
- God's Storehouse – DHCD took a tour of the facility

Councilman Henck

- Concerned with Business Machinery & Tools Tax – Galax is a minority that doesn't allow businesses to de-appreciate their equipment.
- Juneteenth Celebration at Rosenwald Felts School at 11 a.m.
- Destination by Design Meeting – Doing fantastic work
- Public Services meeting 7-16 @ 4 p.m., vote taken, recommendation to discuss with Blue Line Solutions, then move to Council.
- Ranger Station to Galax discussion – on DCR long term plan, letters of support needed
- Galax Grows – Council representative needed for one year

Councilman Warr

- Cruise in – Hillbilly Days, wonderful turnout
- Next Tourism meeting in July – discuss barricade issues

Mayor Greene

- Firing Range upgrades look good

CLOSED SESSION

At 9:25 p.m. Councilman Henck made the motion to enter into closed session in Accordance with Code of VA 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*
- *(A)(5) Prospective or expansion of business or industry where no previous public announcement has been made*

Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.


Note: While in closed session, Vice Mayor White who was away, joined by phone for part of the conversation.

At 10:27 p.m. by a motion by Councilwoman Ritchie, and seconded by Councilman Warr, Council reconvened in open session, with unanimous approval by all, 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, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

Councilman Henck made the motion to recommend Bonnie Faith Haynes to the BZA to fill the vacancy of Doug Williams. The recommendation will be sent to our Attorney to file with the Circuit Court. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Richie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, and Councilwoman Burnett.

ADJOURNMENT at 10:30 p.m.


Mayor


Clerk