

July
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



Happy July! As we enjoy the height of summer, I'm excited to share some wonderful news and upcoming events in our city. This month, we've celebrated our nation's independence with a series of events that brought our community together. Our annual Galax Fire Department's Fourth of July fireworks show, parade, and carnival were all big successes with fun and festivities for all ages. Let's continue to come together and celebrate the spirit of freedom and unity that makes our city so special.

I am also pleased to announce the continuation of our summer programs, including community sports leagues, **TOTALLY FREE** movie nights every Wednesday night at the Rex Theater, and the farmers' market. These events provide great opportunities to enjoy the beautiful weather and connect with friends and neighbors.

Furthermore, our efforts to improve city infrastructure and services are progressing well. We recently completed several road improvements and enhancements, ensuring our city remains a safe and enjoyable place for everyone. Thank you for your ongoing support and participation in making our community vibrant and strong. Wishing you a joyful and safe July!

Warm regards,

Willie

Willie T. Greene, Sr
Mayor
City of Galax



July City Council Meeting 7/8/2024

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Council had a moment of silence In Memory of Sharon Plichta and In Memory of Dennis Jarvis II

OATHS OF HONOR GALAX POLICE DEPT

Galax Police Officer Shane Sizemore



Galax Police Officer Nico Senica



PUBLIC HEARING – FALSE ALARM ORDINANCE

The governing body of the City of Galax, Virginia conducted a public hearing on the 8th day of July, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the City of Galax Municipal Building, 111 East Grayson Street, Galax, Virginia, to receive public comments on an ordinance regulating the installation and maintenance of alarm systems operated by alarm company operators, and amending Chapter 107 of the City Code of the City of Galax Virginia, to require reimbursement of costs incurred in response to false alarms. The proposed ordinance would modify the existing City ordinance concerning intentional fire alarms to provide for reimbursement of the City's costs in responding to intentionally-triggered false alarms. The proposed ordinance would also require registration of businesses utilizing fire alarms, and provide service charges for false alarm responses to unregistered businesses, or registered businesses having four or more unintentionally-triggered false alarms in a calendar year. The proposed ordinance would not impose service charges even for a fourth or subsequent false alarm when the designated contact person for the registered company can be contacted and the response canceled before a full agency response is activated. There were no public comments.

Council adopted the proposed ordinance.

PUBLIC HEARING – TAX RELIEF FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

The governing body of the City of Galax, Virginia conducted a public hearing on the 8th day of July, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the City of Galax Municipal Building, 111 East Grayson Street, Galax, Virginia, to receive public comments on an ordinance amending Sections 137-3 and 137-8 of Chapter 137 of the City Code of the City of Galax, Virginia. The proposed ordinance amendment would change the income limits and tax relief for the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief program by raising maximum income limits for the program by \$5,000 per tier and the amount of tax relief increasing by \$100 per tier. The overall effect of the proposed ordinance would be to increase eligibility for elderly and disabled citizens and increase the amount of tax relief for which they would be eligible.

Council discussed ordinance. There being no public comments, council adopted the proposed ordinance.

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)

July City Council Meeting 7/8/2024 (Continued)



Melanie Fleenor, Mountain Lynx Transit –District Three

ADDITIONAL DEMAND-RESPONSE BUS SERVICE

Ms. Fleenor discussed a proposal to add an additional demand-response bus to the Galax service area. Recently, Galax bus drivers requested that District Three add an additional demand-response bus to their Monday-Friday service. Mountain Lynx Transit currently runs two deviated-route loops in Galax as well as one demand-response bus, which have a high ridership that results in crowded buses and a very busy timetable for the drivers.

Mountain Lynx would like to implement an additional demand-response bus as an experimental service starting August 1st at no cost to the City of Galax. Once they accumulate a couple of months' worth of ridership data, they will either determine that the additional bus is not needed or make a formal request to the City Council to fund a portion of the cost of service of the additional demand-response bus. Localities pay a small fraction of what it costs to provide transit

service and this funding is used as local match when applying for state and federal funding, which pays the lion's share of the cost of service.

Council approved the request

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING – FOOD TRUCK TEMPORARY BUSINESS LICENSE

In May, Commissioner of Revenue Funk discussed implementing 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 per year, this requirement is burdensome and causes many vendors to decline to set up at events. Staff proposed 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. Council agreed with this proposal; however, a public hearing was not set as is required to make a change in the City ordinance. Council was asked to set a public hearing on this matter for the August 12th meeting.

Council scheduled a public hearing for August 12, 2024 regarding the food truck temporary business license.



Commissioner Rene Funk

PROPOSED CHANGES TO LOCAL PEDDLER'S PERMIT

Commissioner Funk noted that Staff is seeing an increasing number of "pop-up" sellers of various merchandise in unapproved areas of the City. As the Commissioner has delved into the issue, Staff is finding that local regulations can be murky regarding the wide variety of where and when people are allowed to set up tents or booths to sell their wares. Many long-standing traditional pop-up vendors and even those vendors that set up at City-run events may be required to get permits from the City. Staff discussed these findings and requested input from Council prior to working with the City Attorney on possible recommended changes to the City ordinance.

After discussion, Council assigned this topic to the appropriate Council sub-committee.

July City Council Meeting 7/8/2024 (Continued)

FY2025 BUDGET APPROPRIATION

Each year, Council creates and approves a budget for the coming fiscal year. After doing so, Council must then actually appropriate these funds so they can be spent. Finance Director Taylor-Gallimore requested Council to formally appropriate the FY2025 budget that was approved at the May 13, 2024 meeting. The approved budget is:

General Fund: \$28,959,526

Utility Fund: \$ 3,661,962

Storm Water Fund: \$ 1,465,878

Council appropriated the FY25 City Budget as presented.

City Council was also asked to appropriate the **FY25 Galax City Schools budget** that was approved at the May 13, 2024 meeting. The approved budget is:

General Operating: \$19,254,146

Cafeteria Fund: \$ 1,598,815

Textbook Fund: \$ 204,179

Council appropriated the FY25 Galax City School budget as presented.



Finance Director Judy Taylor-Gallimore

PUBLISHING OF DELINQUENT TAXES

Finance Director Taylor-Gallimore discussed the publication in the local media of properties that are delinquent in paying real estate taxes as of June 30, 2024. This publication of delinquent taxes is a normal occurrence that has been approved by Council in previous years.

Council approved the publication of the delinquent real estate tax list provided as in prior years.

REX THEATER OPERATIONS AND BOOKING AGREEMENT

City Manager Michael Burnette discussed the City's taking over of operations of the Rex Theater and plans for upcoming programming and potential renovations to the facility. He noted that the existing lease with Backroads Entertainment (BE) has been dissolved and replaced by a booking agreement that will allow BE to continue holding some shows at the Rex while the City takes on the booking of a greater number and variety of performances. A proposed agreement with BE was reached and was reviewed with Council for approval.

Council approved the proposed agreement with Backroads Entertainment as presented.

GOLF CARTS ON CITY STREETS

City Manager Burnette reviewed past Council discussions regarding lessening restrictions on golf carts on City streets. Recently, inquiries have been made regarding this issue and Staff requested input from Council on whether such restrictions should be loosened or lifted and to what degree and in what parts of the City. Staff expects to take Council input and discuss the issue with the relevant City departments and potentially state authorities. Staff would then work to formulate a policy proposal for future Council consideration.

After discussion, Council assigned this topic to the appropriate Council sub-committee.

MOUNT ROGERS PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION APPOINTMENT

City Manager Burnette noted that Mayor Greene's term on the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission expired on June 30, 2024. The PDC has requested that Council re-appoint Mayor Greene or appoint a new Councilperson to the seat. Mayor Greene indicated his willingness to be re-appointed. The appointment can be up to four years depending on Council's wishes. Staff recommended Mayor Greene be re-appointed to the Mount Rogers PDC for a full four-year term.

Council re-appointed Mayor Greene to the Mount Rogers PDC for a four-year term beginning on July 1, 2024.

See All the August Events at the Rex on the Last Page!!!

July City Council Meeting 7/8/2024 (Continued)

PARKS AND RECREATION SPONSORSHIP POLICY

City Manager Burnette noted that the City's Parks and Recreation Department has been fortunate to annually receive sponsorship dollars from businesses and organizations throughout the City which enables many sports and other events to occur at a minimal cost to City taxpayers. Like volunteers, without the funds so generously donated by the City's businesses and other organizations, many Parks and Recreation offerings might have to be scaled back or eliminated. While the City is exceedingly grateful to these important donors, it has been noted that an up-to-date sponsorship policy has not been adopted by Council. To ensure that sponsors of these offerings, especially those enjoyed by the City's youth, reflect the accepted community standards of the local citizenry, Staff proposed a sponsorship policy to guide how the Parks and Recreation Department operates regarding sponsorships.

Council approved the sponsorship guidelines as presented.



Grants Administrator Jolena Young

VARIOUS GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Grants Administrator Young discussed current potential grant opportunities and other items related to grant funding including:

- ***Mount Rogers Planning District Grant Opportunity***

Staff requested approval to submit one to two applications to the FY2025 Southwest Virginia Water and Wastewater Construction Grant Fund for construction and related costs of water and wastewater system and related facilities and an application for \$10,000 in planning and technical assistance for design of water or wastewater projects associated with Kipling Lane or the Vaughan Restoration project. Southwest Virginia Water and Wastewater Construction Grant will fund up to \$100,000 with no match required. One of the construction applications will request \$65,680 in equipment and services for upgrading the existing SCADA system phone line telemetry to unlicensed Ethernet radio communication to provide a fully functional telemetry and instrumentation system. There is no match required. The grant administrator is working with Water and Wastewater Directors to determine if there is an additional project to submit.

- ***Twin County Community Foundation Grant***

Twin County Community Foundation recognizes the importance of equipment required by organizations to better serve the community. In

order to reduce resources and efforts for applicants requesting funds for capital needs not attached to an extended project or program, TCCF will accept applications related to purchase and/or installation of equipment with an award amount totaling no more than \$10,000. Staff requested Council approval to submit an application for \$10,000 for sound and/or lighting equipment for the Rex Theater. The City will pay the balance needed for the required equipment through general funds which may include grant funds from other sources.

- ***City of Galax/Downtown Galax Grows Agreement***

The Advancing Main Street application process requires a resolution/agreement between the 501(c)3 and the locality. Ms. Young presented the proposed agreement for the Council's approval. The agreement was presented in draft form to the Downtown Galax Grows Board on July 3, 2024. The Grant Administrator/Interim Main Street Director requested Council to approve the agreement.

- ***Get the Lead Out***

The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) has offered free Technical Assistance (TA) related to the Get the Lead Out initiative. Staff has requested the TA and will be working with EPA and Virginia Department of Health – Office of Drinking Water (VDH-ODW) to scope the EPA involvement to complement the work underway by CHA through the VDH-ODW LEAP Grant program.

July City Council Meeting 7/8/2024 (Continued)

The 2021 Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) require localities to submit an initial service line inventory by October 16, 2024 and ultimately work toward the goal of replacing 100% of the nations' lead service lines. An informational bulletin was provided.

Council approved the requests as presented

DISCUSSION OF CURRENT SIGN ORDINANCES



Planning Director Doug Williams

Mr. Williams discussed current issues that City departments are having with various signage being put up around the City. In many cases this includes signs that are being erected off premises, left up too long, or are being installed without permits. Council has repeatedly reinforced its desire to be as pro-business as possible and, therefore, Staff has been looking for ways to ease the regulatory burden on the firms erecting these signs while protecting the safety and viewshed of the City's streets. Staff requested Council guidance on potential changes that could be made to the existing sign ordinance that will be palatable to Council and the business

community without sacrificing traffic safety and/or the City's streetscapes.

After discussion, Council assigned this topic to a Council sub-committee for discussion.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Mayor Greene received a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of dedicated service to the State Executive Council for Children's Services 2018-2024 and having perfect attendance.



**Scott Riner, Executive Director
Office of Children's Service,
Mayor Willie Greene and
Honorable Leah Mills,
Deputy Director Secretary of
Health and Human Resources**

CHECK OUT THE REX



LIVE AT THE

REX Events Calendar

- AUG 1 OFF THE RAILS BLUEGRASS
- AUG 2 CROOKED RD. CONCERT THE BLUE RIDGE GIRLS/ THE LOOSE STRINGS BAND BLUEGRASS
- AUG 15 HANNAH DASHER COUNTRY
- AUG 16 SPANK 80'S TRIBUTE BAND
- AUG 23 RUSSELL MOORE & IIIIRD TYME OUT BLUEGRASS
- AUG 29 DORI FREEMAN & FAMILY BLUEGRASS

ALL THE EVENTS START
AT 7PM,
DOORS OPEN AT 6PM

OR SCAN TO



BUY TICKETS ONLINE:
f THE REX THEATER

BUY TICKETS

JOIN US AT THE REX THEATER FOR:

MOVIE FREE NIGHT

ALL MOVIES START
AT 6:30PM

AN AMERICAN TALE

JULY 24

TOP GUN

JULY 31

THE NOTEBOOK

AUG 14

STEEL MAGNOLIAS

AUG 21

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY

AUG 28

FREE ADMISSION TO ALL MOVIES