

**Galax City Council
Minutes
October 7, 2024**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber on October 7, 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, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE – Vice Mayor White

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of September 9, 2024

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the minutes as corrected by Councilwoman Burnett. Councilman Warr seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

HURRICANE HELENE RECOVERY UPDATE

- City Manager Burnette provided an update on Hurricane Helene recovery, highlighting 100% restoration of power, water, sewer, and telecommunications.
- Dumpsters to be placed for public debris cleanup, and a Disaster Recovery Center was being set up.
- City Manager Burnette introduced key City personnel involved in the emergency operations center, including Megan Helmick, Chief Cooper, Melanie Sumney, Justin Campbell, Captain James Cox, Mike Woodel, Mike Ayers, and Patti Price-Love.
- The team's efforts in managing the emergency, including water transportation to the hospital and extensive public information dissemination, were praised.
- Councilman Warr and Councilwoman Ritchie expressed gratitude to the emergency responders and discussed the need for information on available assistance.
- City Manager Burnette and Captain James Cox discussed the upcoming Disaster Recovery Center and the importance of public information.
- Councilman Henck and Mayor Greene emphasized the community's resilience and the need for post-disaster planning.
- Vice Mayor White and Councilwoman Burnett highlighted the importance of community support and information sharing.

DISCUSSION ON NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

- Angela Davis from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation explained the benefits of joining the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- Ms. Davis clarified misconceptions about the program, emphasizing that it did not require relocation of structures or businesses.
- Mayor Greene and Council members discussed the potential impact on local businesses and residents.
- Davis reassured Council that most structures were already outside the Special Flood Hazard Area and that the program can be joined concurrently with addressing individual properties.

PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE AMENDMENT OF GOLF CART ORDINANCE

Mayor Greene announced this was the date Council set for a proposed amendment of Chapter 148 of City Code regarding the Golf Cart Ordinance to allow the operation of golf carts on City streets where the speed limit is limited to 25 miles per hour or less.

The Traffic Safety Committee met previously, considering Council’s request and making recommendations to Council at the last Council meeting. The next step was to hold a public hearing. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments.

- Council discussed the amendments regarding golf cart usage on city streets.
- Councilwoman Burnett raised safety concerns of allowing golf carts to be on certain dangerous curvy streets, and suggested a case-by-case approach for approvals.
- Confirmed the intent was allow golf carts to cross only at the controlled intersection at the stop light at Main Street & Route 58 (East Stuart Drive).
- There was a consensus from Council that more work needed to be done on the proposed amendment with a focus on ensuring safety and proper crossings for golf carts.

With no further comments made, Mayor Greene closed the public hearing.

Councilman Warr made the motion to send the ordinance back to the committee for further discussion and adjustments. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT OF CHAPTER 51 OF CITY CODE REGARDING PRIVATE MEDICAL TRANSPORTS WITHIN THE CITY

Mayor Greene announced this was the date Council set for a public hearing to receive public comments on amending Chapter 51 of the Galax City Code to allow private medical transport companies to provide medical transportation of individuals within the City limits for non-emergency medical transportation only. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments.

- City Manager Burnette presented the need for changes to City Code to allow private medical transport companies to assist with hospital transports, and an amendment was required.
- Councilwoman Ritchie suggested including a clause for emergency 911 calls, and Captain James Cox said it was feasible, then clarified the limitations.
- Council discussed the importance of ensuring qualified transport services and the potential benefits for the hospital and EMS.
- Confirmed the proposed private medical transports would not be for emergency 911 calls, only transports from Twin County Regional Hospital back to the local nursing homes. *and other places as needed*.

With no further comments made, Mayor Greene closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the amendment as presented. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

PUBLIC HEARING – REQUEST FOR ZONING CHANGE - FITZER UPPER, LLC (PARCEL 55-94, 95)

Mayor Greene announced this was the date set for a Public Hearing for a zoning change request submitted by Fitzer Upper, LLC. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comment. Director of Planning & Community Development Williams, explained the owners of the property located at 201 W. Oldtown Street sought to change the zoning district designation from B-2 'General Business' to R-2 'Medium Density Residential'. The primary structure on the property had operated as a church building until a structural concern associated with the east exterior wall caused church services and activities to cease. The owner's intended future use for the building is to renovate as a single-family residence. The Planning Commission heard the request and approved it unanimously.

With no further public comments, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the request as presented. Councilman Henck seconded, and the motion *was approved by the following votes of “yea”*: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers. Councilman Warr abstained due to a personal conflict of interest.

PUBLIC HEARING – REQUEST FOR ZONING CHANGE - DAVID A. WILSON (PARCEL 69-4)

Mayor Greene announced this was the date set for a Public Hearing for a zoning change request submitted by Mr. David Wilson. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comment. Director of Planning & Community Development Williams, explained the owners of the property, sought to change the zoning district designation of the 12.42-acre property recently purchased at the intersection of Greenville Road and Kenbrook Drive, from M-1 'Light Industrial' to R-2 'Medium Density Residential'. The owner's intended future use for the property is to construct a single-family home. The Planning Commission heard the request and approved it unanimously.

With no further public comments, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed.

Councilman Bowers made the motion to approve the request as presented. Councilman Henck seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

PUBLIC HEARING – REQUEST FOR ZONING CHANGE - VIRGINIA CAROLINA HEATING & COOLING, LLC (PARCEL 37-5,6)

Mayor Greene announced this was the date set for a Public Hearing for a zoning change request submitted by Virginia Carolina Heating & Cooling, LLC. Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comment. Director of Planning & Community Development Williams, explained the owners of the property, sought to change the zoning district designation of the .52-acre property recently purchased at 708 Glendale Road from R-2 'Medium Density Residential' to B-2 'General Business'. The owner's intended future use for the property is to construct a commercial building for operation of their HVAC business. The Planning Commission heard the request and approved it unanimously. Keith Barker spoke briefly about Chad Reeves bringing two businesses to the City of Galax, and described the site plan and how it fits on the property.

With no further public comments, Mayor Greene declared the public hearing closed.

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

OLD BUSINESS

INTERSECTION OF CENTER STREET AND MAIN STREET UPDATE

- Doug Williams provided an update on the intersection improvement project, including the placement of curb and gutter and traffic signal installation.
- The project now back on track for substantial completion by December 13, with potential extensions to five or six-day workweeks.
- The project included paving the intersection and addressing stormwater management issues.
- Council discussed the impact of the storm on the project timeline and the efforts to stay on schedule.

SWANSON STREET STORMWATER IMPROVEMENTS

- Doug Williams presented the Swanson Street stormwater improvement project to Council, detailing the scope and benefits.

- The project would involve replacing water and sewer lines and installing reinforced concrete pipes to manage stormwater.
- The low bid for the project came from BW Infrastructures, LLC, in the amount of \$1,231,170, with the project expected to improve drainage and reduce flooding in the area.
- Council discussed the importance of the project and the need for timely completion to address ongoing drainage issues.

Councilman Warr made the motion to award the construction contract to the lowest bidder, BW Infrastructures, LLC. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

TEMPORARY ADDITIONAL DEMAND-RESPONSE BUS UPDATE

Melanie Fleenor, Mountain Lynx Transit provided Council with an update on the results of the recent addition of a Mountain Lynx Demand-Response Bus within the City of Galax. Ms. Fleenor explained how the extra bus had been such an asset to the community. Other Mountain Lynx employees came to describe how grateful they were to have the extra bus. Ms. Fleenor said the funding from the City of Galax would be in the amount of \$10,668 per year. Council discussed the request further that the funding would come from the Contingency Fund.

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

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF LOCAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION

City Manager Burnette informed Council that he declared a local state of emergency on Friday, September 27, 2024 as allowed by the Galax City Code and the Code of Virginia. He further explained by state code, it was required that this declaration be confirmed by the governing body at its next regularly scheduled meeting or at a special meeting within 45 days of the declaration, whichever occurred first. City Manager Burnette requested that Council retroactively approve the local declaration of a state of emergency due to Hurricane Helene. He confirmed with Capt. James Cox if the City of Galax had emergency designation, then it would be within the city manager's power to lift that sort of restriction during emergency time so that we could have folks in here.

Councilman Henck made the motion to retroactively approve the Local State of Emergency declaration made by the City Manager on Friday, September 27, 2024. Vice Mayor White seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers. Mayor Greene briefly left during the vote and then returned.

APPROVAL OF DESIGNATION AND PRESERVATION FUND FOR REX THEATER - VA250 PRESERVATION FUND – REX THEATER ADA ACCESSIBILITY

Grants Administrator Young discussed the invitation to submit a full application for the Virginia 250 Preservation Fund for the Rex Theater. The 2024-2026 Virginia Biennial Budget to initiate a grant program to support improvements at significant historic sites and history museums in Virginia in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution and the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence. At the September Meeting, the Council approved for City Staff to submit a pre-application.

The City met the minimum requirements for the grant, and have been asked to submit a full application. She highlighted the competitive nature of the \$20 million grant with \$135 million in requests from 227 pre-applications. Council was asked to approve a resolution committing a match of \$250,000 to potentially receive \$750,000 in funding for an improvement project of \$1,000,000 at the historical Rex Theater. The project would include installation of an elevator to reach 4 levels; a stage lift for equipment and performers; ADA accessible bathrooms in the basement; and possibly some HVAC improvements to improve air quality.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the request of the commitment of matching funding and approval of the resolution. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

RECREATION ECONOMY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES’ APPLICATION

Grants Administrator Young discussed an application for technical assistance from the EPA to extend the trail into downtown and to Felts Park, with no match required. She explained with Recreation Economy for Rural Communities assistance, a planning team would help communities bring together local residents and other stakeholders to decide on strategies and an action plan to grow the local outdoor recreation economy. The planning assistance process would take place over 8 to 12 months, with a focal point being a facilitated community workshop. At the workshop, participants would work together to identify a vision, goals, and specific actions to realize the locally set goals.

Councilwoman Burnett made the motion to approve the resolution allowing City Staff to submit an application for EPA RERC Technical Assistance to determine feasibility of connecting the New River Trail to Historic Downtown Galax and Felts Park with a future vision to connect to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Councilman Warr seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

CITIZEN COMMENTS (Limited to 3 minutes per speaker or 5 minutes per group) Mayor Greene outlines the rules for public comment, emphasizing the importance of addressing the council as a whole and limiting personal attacks.

- Kayla Yates – Hurricane Helene
- Charlie Smith – Hurricane Helene

CITY MANAGER AND COUNCIL UPDATES

- City Manager Burnette reminded Council about an upcoming event with Senator Mark Warner and the Galax Fire Prevention Parade.
- Councilman Bowers expressed gratitude for the city staff’s efforts and mentions potential incentives for new businesses.
- Councilwoman Burnett thanked everyone for their help and mentioned the need for a generator for the water treatment plant.
- Vice Mayor White highlighted the coordination efforts with God Storehouse and the importance of having a central location for donations.
- Councilwoman Ritchie noted the volunteer efforts were impressive.
- Councilman Henck reported an unsafe area on a sidewalk on Swanson Street that needed to be addressed soon.
- Councilman Warr discussed donations for first responders, his gratefulness for the City.
- Mayor Greene and City Manager Burnette discussed the importance of obtaining a generator for the City Water Plant.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:30 p.m., Mayor Greene entertained a motion to enter into closed session by Vice Mayor White in Accordance with Code of VA 2.2-3711:

(A)(3) Discussion of the acquisition of real property or the disposition of real property

- Rosenwald-Felts
- 406 Old Town Street

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

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION /ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

At 9:45 p.m. by a motion by Councilman Bowers, and seconded by Councilwoman Burnett, Council reconvened in open session, with unanimous approval by all, and 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, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

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

ADJOURNMENT at 9:45 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk