

**Galax City Council
Minutes
November 12, 2024**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber on November 12, 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 – Mayor Greene

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of October 7, 2024

Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to approve the minutes as corrected by Councilwoman Burnett. 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.

RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT: Officer Jason Hawks

Mayor Greene made a presentation to Officer Jason Hawks in recognition of his retirement as a Galax City Police Officer after almost eighteen (18) years of service. He served the City of Galax from January 1, 2007 through August 14, 2017 and again August 24, 2017 through September 30, 2024.

POLICE OFFICER OATHS OF OFFICE

Mayor Greene administered the oaths of office to newly hired Galax Police Department Officers, Brian Barnes and Isaac Diamond. Auxiliary Officers who work at GGEMS, Wade Johnson and Micheal Peters were unable to attend, and will be given their oaths at the December meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Hurricane Helene Recovery Update

- City Manager Burnette introduced Ben Accurti from FEMA for an update on hurricane recovery efforts.
- Mr. Accurti provided details on individual assistance funding, agricultural recovery events, and disaster recovery centers.
- City Manager Burnette provided an update on storm expenses, debris clean-up, and the temporary generator at the water treatment plant.
- Council members asked questions about the duration of the disaster recovery centers and utility work in downtown.

Galax Grows Downtown Revitalization Plan

- Main Street Director Ryan discussed the final product from Destination by Design for the downtown revitalization plan.
- A public hearing was requested for the December council meeting to receive feedback on the plan.
- Main Street Director Ryan also mentioned the advancing application for Virginia Main Street, with a decision expected in January 2025.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the request to hold a public hearing to received feedback on the Downtown Revitalization Plan. 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.

FY2024 Rollover Discussion

- City Manager Burnette explained the process of budget rollover - funding that came in higher than we expected, expenses that were lower than expected. We had 1.8 million in rollover available. Council can approve one-time expenses, put into fund balance, or other options. We asked our individual city departments what they would like to request. We received 36 projects that came in around \$2.4 million. My office also had approximately six projects that were total of about \$850,000, which was quite a bit more than what we had available in funding. The request to Council was that the Audit & Finance Committee meet to review these projects, prioritize the ones that the committee likes, and then bring that back to Council at the December meeting to hopefully approve those recommendations.
- Council members discussed the generator cost at the water plant and the need for pre-authorization for the purchase.

Councilman Henck made the motion to refer the budget rollover requests to the Audit & Finance Committee and provide recommendations at the December Council meeting. 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.

Rex Theater Planning Contracts

- City Manager Burnette recommended contracts with Spectrum Design and Gerdon Management Group for the Rex Theater.
- Spectrum Design would be handling the preliminary architectural report, and Gerdon Management Group would handle the business operations plan.

Councilman Warr 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

High Country Lights Update

- Mr. William Bottomley, creator of the High Country Lights show at Felts Park, was excited to inform Council of more new events and food trucks this Christmas season. He discussed the three pages of activities that were planned. He informed Council that there were 72,300 visitors to the light show last year.
- The event starts on November 23, and Santa arrives by air on November 30.
- Additions include photo ops and the construction of Santa's workshop.
- Mayor Greene and Council members expressed appreciation for the hard work and dedication to the event by Mr. Bottomley.

Discussion of the FY2025-2026 City Budget Process

- City Manager Burnette outlined the budget season process and proposed a draft calendar for Council's review. The next fiscal year begins on July 1, 2025 and ends on June 30, 2026. There was a Council consensus to approve the proposed FY2025-26 City Budget Calendar.

VDOT Grant Request

Grants Administrator Young wasn't present yet for the VDOT discussion. Mayor Greene postponed the topic until the end of the meeting.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Nancy Luague – Concerns regarding communications and future allocations for the City of Galax.

VDOT Grant Request

- Grants Administrator Young requested approval to apply for a VDOT paving grant for a section of East Stuart Drive. Applications can be made for up to \$1.5 million.
- Council members discuss the timeline for the grant and the importance of paving in the city.

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, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

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

City Manager Burnette

- Provided update on GGEMS ceasing transports.
- Discussed lead pipe inspections by GLO crews.
- Notification to residents about service line material.

Councilman Bowers

- Expressed gratitude to Veterans, FEMA, and other community members for their support during the hurricane.

Councilwoman Burnett

- Attended the following meetings/events:
 - VML Conference in Virginia Beach
 - Grand Re-Opening of Northway Apts.
 - GGEMS/TCRH meetings

Vice Mayor White

- Attended the Blue Ridge Veteran’s Memorial service on Veteran’s Day.
 - Appreciative of our library staff helping with the event.
- Thanked Councilman Henck & City Manager Burnette for efforts getting Grounded Coffee established at their new location.

Councilwoman Ritchie

- Discussed the Eastview Rehab. Housing Project – Two houses being worked on and two or three under contract.

Councilman Henck

- Attended BRCEDA meeting
- Discussed the “Hampton Property” – potential retirement/assisted living area.
- Public Services Committee to meet on Dec. 3
- Storm damage discussion
- Rosenwald Revamped/Rooftop meeting discussion

Councilman Warr

- Tourism Committee meeting
 - Christmas Festival on Dec. 14, 12:00 – 6:00 p.m.
 - 85 Vendors signed up
- Virginia Main Street discussion

Mayor Greene

- Attended Northway Apts. open house.
- Discussed FEMA and their efforts.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:30 p.m., Mayor Greene entertained a motion to enter into closed session by Councilman Henck in Accordance with Code of VA 2.2-3711:

Request for Closed Meeting in Accordance with 2.2-3711

- (A)(3) Discussion of the acquisition of real property or the disposition of real property
 - Rosenwald-Felts
 - Hampton Property
 - Kipling Property
 - Grayson Street Parking
- (A)(7) Actual or probable litigation

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.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

At 8:10 p.m. by a motion by Councilman Warr and seconded by Councilman Henck, 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.

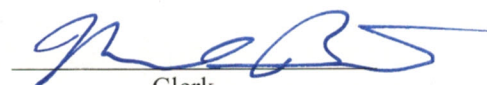
Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the Rooftop Lease. Councilman Bowers seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the following votes of "yea": Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

At 8:20 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 Warr, Councilman Henck, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Bowers.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:20 p.m.



Mayor



Clerk