

**Galax City Council
Minutes
December 9, 2024**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber on December 9, 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 Chauncey Robinson.

PRAYER – Councilwoman Ritchie

PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE – Students of the Galax Gymnastics Center
Vice Mayor White welcomed the students & staff of the Galax Gymnastics Center. After they led the Pledge of Allegiance, Vice Mayor White thanked them for attending and presented each with a treat bag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Regular Meeting of November 12, 2024**

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the minutes 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 Robinson.

CITY COUNCIL OATH OF OFFICE: Councilman Chauncey Robinson
Grayson County Clerk of Court Renee Nester conducted the swearing in of newly-elected Council member Chauncey Robinson.

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE: Former Councilman Hunter Bowers
Mayor Greene recognized the service of former Councilman Hunter Bowers who recently retired from the Galax City Council. Mr. Bowers served from January 8, 2024 to November 26, 2024.

POLICE OFFICER OATHS OF OFFICE
Mayor Greene administered the oaths of office to Galax Police Dept. Auxiliary Officers Wade Johnson and Michael Peters who auxiliary officers who work at GGEMS and volunteer on the City's GPD SERT team as medics.

PUBLIC HEARING: Downtown Galax Grows Revitalization Plan
Mayor Greene announced this was the date set by Council to hold a public hearing regarding the proposed Downtown Galax Revitalization Plan. He opened the floor by welcoming Galax Main Street Director Ryan and representatives of consulting firm Destination by Design who led a discussion and presentation of the final proposed plan for the revitalization of the downtown Galax area. Ms. Ryan explained Staff had been working with a committee of interested local citizens and Destination by Design to craft a vision and roadmap for the revitalization of the downtown Galax area. These efforts included numerous opportunities for Staff, the public, and Council to review and comment on the plan as it was being developed and has resulted in a final draft document that was presented to Council for final review and discussion. The representatives of Destination by Design explained the strategy they had developed to work through data, research, and community input to help them develop an identity to help determine who Galax really was. The proposed new brand included a custom hand-drawn G with a music note in the negative space, representing mountain culture and Appalachian music. The brand goals would be to expand, amplify, and unify Galax's identity, attracting more businesses and visitors. After Council discussed in depth the proposed plan and asked several questions, Mayor Greene called for further public comments. With no comments made, Mayor Greene closed the floor.

Councilman Warr made the motion to adopt and approve the strategic plan as outlined for a plan or a roadmap towards the 15 year strategic plan. 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 Robinson.

OLD BUSINESS

Hurricane Helene Recovery Assistance

Ms. Anna Nunez, Public Affairs Specialist with the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience, provided helpful information to Council on federal assistance to residents and businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Swanson Street Stormwater Contract

City Manager Burnette informed Council that after approval of the Swanson Street Stormwater Project contract award at the October 7th Council meeting, the consulting engineer prepared a formal Notice of Award for signature by Galax City and issued it to the successful bidder, BW Infrastructure, LLC (BWI), with a proposed construction agreement. BWI proceeded to return the required Performance and Payment Bonds and Certificates of Insurance. City Manager Burnette explained that Staff was working to finalize the contract with BWI in the coming days. He requested approval from Council, for Staff to finalize and execute the contract. He added that BWI had already begun the shop drawing submittal process in good faith. The next steps after executing the agreement would be to schedule a Preconstruction Conference and issue a Notice to Proceed in anticipation of construction commencement in early January 2025.

Councilman Henck made the motion to authorize the City Manager and City Attorney to finalize and execute the contract as described. 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 Robinson.

Discussion of the FY2025-2026 Budget Calendar

City Manager Burnette presented a proposed budget calendar for FY2025-26 to Council. He explained the next fiscal year would begin on July 1, 2025 and ends on June 30, 2026. Councilman Henck requested that the March date listed for presentation of the initial proposed budget to Council be left open until Council approves and sets the Council meeting dates for 2025.

Councilman Henck made the motion to approve the proposed budget calendar for FY2025-26. 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 Robinson.

FY2024 Rollover Discussion

City Manager Burnette informed Council the Audit and Finance Committee had met and reviewed the proposed one-time expenses requested by Staff and made a final recommendation of how these requested funds should be used. These unrestricted remaining funds in the amount of \$1,823,381 which were rolled over from the FY2024 budget were approved by Council to be moved to a budget amendment to the FY 2025 budget in a Capital Contingency line item and a General Contingency line item. Council had previously reviewed the requests at the November 12 meeting and directed the Audit & Finance Committee to further review and make recommendations at the December meeting. *Mayor Greene left for a few minutes. Vice Mayor Beth White filled in. Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the recommendations for the rollover funds, as outlined in our previous meeting. 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 Robinson.*

Sewer Utility Fund Injection

City Manager Burnette informed Council that one of the things they decided not to fund out of the rollover was a sewer utility fund injection. We need to do that because we're splitting our water and sewer utilities on the books,

and so there's a need for \$338,000 to be put into the sewer fund. He further explained what we needed to do was take that from reserves, and we would need to have a public hearing on that in January, if Council approves.

Vice Mayor White addressed first, the allocation of resources. Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the request. 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 Robinson.

Vice Mayor White addressed the second, the approval of a public hearing at the January Council meeting. Councilman Warr made the motion. Councilman Robinson 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 Robinson.

Amendment of City Code Regarding Golf Carts

City Manager Burnette explained in October, Council held a public hearing regarding amending Chapter 148 of the Galax City Code, Article VI to allow the operation of golf carts on City streets where the speed limit is limited to 25 miles per hour or less. After hearing public comment, Council sent the proposal to the Public Services Committee for further study. The committee met and has made a recommendation to allow golf carts on all roads with a posted speed limit of 25MPH or less, except for Country Club Lane, Fries Road, Kenbrook Drive, Chestnut Drive, and Poplar Knob Road.

Councilwoman Burnett made the motion to approve the amendment. 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 Robinson. Mayor Greene rejoined the meeting.

Amendment of City Code Regarding Itinerant Merchants

City Manager Burnette discussed that Council had previously expressed concerns that the conducting of business by itinerant merchants within the City on an ongoing basis may disincentivize the establishment of permanent businesses within the City, and may contribute to congestion and alterations of traffic patterns in areas of the City not designed or intended to accommodate such traffic on a permanent or regular basis, and may cause disruption to neighboring businesses and residences. He explained for this reason, Staff had prepared a draft ordinance for Council's consideration. This change would limit an itinerant merchant to setting up within the City no more than three times per year or any property from hosting such merchants more than three times per year. With no more than three consecutive days at each of the three allowable yearly occurrences. A temporary business license would need to be purchased for \$25 for each of the three times a sale would be held in a year. Exceptions are proposed for such merchants that set up at City events or on City property with City approval. Food trucks would be exempt from the ordinance change. City Manager Burnette stated if there was an interest in moving forward with this ordinance change, a public hearing would need to be scheduled.

Vice Mayor White made the motion to set a public hearing on January 13 on the ordinance amendment with the addition of the \$25 short term fee. 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 Robinson. Mayor Greene rejoined the meeting.

Blue Line Solutions

Chief Cooper gave an update to Council on the Blue Line Solutions product and partnership. Blue Line Solutions is a law enforcement owned and operated photo speed program with a vision and mission based solely on the reduction in speed, crashes and injuries in school and work zones. Chief Cooper explained his request was for Council authorize the City Manager to sign contracts. Greg Hawks from Blue Line Solutions was present and discussed the program

with Council. Proposed amendments were discussed and a final review of the contract would be reviewed by legal counsel.

Councilman Henck had questions regarding contract adjustments, stating it could be struck if both parties agreed. Also, a discussion about the enforcement threshold for speed limits, agreeing to start at 30 mph instead of 25. The final request was for an amendment to reflect the \$25 fee and ensure no increase in the adjusted fee.

Councilman Warr made the motion to proceed with the execution of the contract as outlined after final review has been performed by the city attorney and blue line solutions. 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 Robinson.

NEW BUSINESS

Police Department Vehicle Take Home Policy

Chief Cooper made a request for Council to approve a proposed Police Department Vehicle Take Home Policy. The discussion included that City of Galax Police Department recognized that take home vehicles offer benefits to both the agency and the City. Maintenance costs were reduced, quicker response times were achieved and crime deterred by the increased presence. Staff put together a policy for take home vehicles for Council to review. If adopted, vehicles would be assigned for take home status based on seniority and availability while ensuring access to vehicles by officers which are not eligible for the program.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the proposed GPD Vehicle Take Home Policy. Councilman Henck 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 Robinson.

Rosenwald-Felts Historic Designation

Grants Administrator Young informed Council the Rosenwald-Felts School had been approved for inclusion on the National Registry. She stated that the National Park Service no longer provided signage for these facilities. Staff and Councilmembers have researched what kind of signage would be needed and appropriate for the historic location. Based on the research of other historic sites, the committee believed we would need a plaque for the building, a custom outdoor site sign with a brief history, and at least 3 wayfinding signs: 1) near the intersection of Country Club Ln and E Stuart Dr; 2) near the intersection of Calloway St and Country Club Ln; and 3) near the intersection of Rosenwald Felts Dr and Calloway Street. Ms. Young provided a brochure of signage and pricing. She said a rough estimate on cost would be \$3,000 - \$4,000.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the request to authorize Staff to procure and install historic plaque on the Rosenwald-Felts School building, a historic site sign, and approximately three wayfinding signs for an estimated cost of \$4,000. Councilwoman Burnett seconded, and the motion was approved by the following votes of “yea”: Mayor Greene, Vice Mayor White, Councilman Warr, and Councilwoman Burnett. Those who abstained due to a conflict of interest due to being members of the Rosenwald Revamped Board included: Councilwoman Ritchie Councilman Henck, and Councilman Robinson.

SMARP Grant Request

Grants Administrator Young explained to Council the City and Main Street organization, was awarded a \$30,000 small area plan grant, and had been working with Destination by Design on the final scope for the streetscape improvements for the Grayson Street corridor. Ms. Young requested approval to extend the existing contract with

Destination by Design. She explained the need for detailed schematic drawings for a VDOT grant application. The request was for the City Manager to sign the contract once legal counsel had finished the review and approved it.

Councilman Warr made the motion to authorize the City Manager to execute the contract. 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 Robinson.

CITIZEN COMMENTS – None

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

City Manager Burnette

- Christmas Festival
- Employee Christmas Dinner
- Christmas box packing at GFD
- Underground propane tank discussion
- VML Board of Directors – deadline Jan. 1
- GLO Lead Pipe Program

Councilman Warr

- Welcomed Councilman Robinson
- Galax Grows – Weekly events
- Public Services – Additional signage for jake brakes

Councilman Henck

- Water Plant Project discussion
- Flock Cameras approved

Councilwoman Ritchie

- Busy Christmas season downtown

Vice Mayor White

- Coffee with the Chamber & Grounded Coffee
- WCC ribbon cutting
- God’s Storehouse – Foster Children’s Christmas Party

Councilwoman Burnett

- GGEMS discussion – problems alleviated with transports
- Traffic Safety Committee – Approval of four way stops on Lafayette & Center Street

Councilman Robinson

- Stated he was glad to be there and honored to serve.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:50 p.m., Mayor Greene entertained a motion to enter into closed session by Councilwoman Ritchie 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
 - 406 W. Oldtown Street
 - Rex Theater

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 Robinson.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

At 10:25 p.m. on a motion by Councilman Warr and seconded by Councilwoman Ritchie, 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 Robinson.

At 10:30 p.m. Councilman Warr 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 Robinson.

ADJOURNMENT at 10:30 p.m.

Mayor

Clerk