

May

2025

## 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 MAY 2025



**MEMORIAL DAY**

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



## A Message to Our Citizens

As we move into the month of May, I want to take a moment to reflect on the season of renewal and gratitude. This is a time when our community begins to bloom—literally and figuratively. We see gardens growing, neighbors walking, and families gathering outdoors. It’s a reminder of the strength and beauty of our town and the people who call it home.

This month, we also pause to honor one of the most solemn and significant days of the year—Memorial Day. On this day, we remember and pay tribute to the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country. Their sacrifice is the foundation of the freedoms we enjoy every day. I encourage each of you to take a moment on Memorial Day to reflect, to honor, and if possible, to participate in local events that recognize our fallen heroes.

Let us continue working together to make our community stronger, kinder, and more united. I’m proud of the progress we are making, and I remain committed to serving you with transparency, integrity, and a heart for all our residents.

Wishing you a safe and meaningful Memorial Day, and a joyful start to your summer.

If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, please don’t hesitate to reach out. My door is always open.

Sincerely,

*Willie*

Willie T. Greene, Sr  
Mayor, City of Galax



# May City Council Meeting 5/12/2025

Here is a quick summary of our last Council meeting.

## **PUBLIC HEARING: Appointment of School Board Members**

The Galax City Council held a Public Hearing to receive public comments regarding nominees or applicants to the School Board to fill two seats. The term of office for these positions is three years with the term commencing on July 1, 2025. Section 22.1-29.1 of the Virginia Code provides that “No nominee or applicant whose name has not been considered at the Public Hearing shall be appointed as a School Board member.” Members of the public were encouraged to attend and provide input concerning the contemplated appointments.

**Only two candidates have applied for the School Board positions: Reverend Doctor Kevin Rosenfeld and Ms. Jessica Whitaker. Council appointed both Reverend Doctor Kevin Rosenfeld and Ms. Jessica Whitaker to serve on the School Board for another three-year term.**

## **PUBLIC HEARING: Update City Code to Clarify Prohibitions on Animal Nuisances**

The City of Galax, Virginia conducted a public hearing to receive public comments on a proposed ordinance amending Chapter 46 of the Galax City Code, Section 46-2 (B), to update the Code to clarify prohibitions on animal nuisances.

**City Council heard public comment on the proposed changes to the Code section And approved, the request to amend City Code Section 46-2 (B).**

## **PUBLIC HEARING: Zoning District Change Request at 501 North Main Street**

The Galax City Council held a public hearing to receive comments on a zoning request at 501 North Main Street. 501 North Main, LLC (Applicant) has requested a zoning district change for Parcel 45-41 located at 501 N. Main Street from Business-General (B-2) District to Residential Medium-Density (R-2) District. The Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on Tuesday, April 22, 2025 to receive comments on the request. Planning Director Williams noted that the property was originally constructed and used as a single-family home but changed to a business use for a period longer than one year and, therefore, is required to now comply with the regulations of the B-2 zone. The applicant desires to market the property for sale as a single-family and two-family dwelling. Possible other uses including a bed & breakfast or professional office would also be available pending future application by the new owner for a Conditional Use Permit. Planning Commission recommended to approve the zoning change request from General Business (B-2) to Medium Density Residential (R-2).

**City Council heard the public comments on the proposed zoning change, after which Council approved the request.**

**PUBLIC HEARING:  
VDOT FY27 Grant Application**  
City Council conducted a public hearing to receive public comments on a proposed application for pedestrian and

road improvements including ADA crosswalks on East Grayson Street from Main Street to Carroll Street. Council was also asked to adopt the updated VDOT Capital Plan and a resolution to go along with the submission.

**City Council heard public comment on the proposed grant application and approved the submission of the application, adopted the proposed VDOT capital projects plan, and a resolution in support of the project.**



**APCo Rep. Jake Holmes**

## **PRESENTATION: Appalachian Power**

APCo Representative Jake Holmes was on hand to discuss the recent General Assembly session, explain new initiatives to benefit customers, and to make other announcements for the good of the community. He ended his presentation with a pledge for \$7,500 from APCo to sponsor the 2025 Fireman’s Carnival and also expressed interested in supporting the annual Christmas Food Drive.

**City Council heard the presentation and asked several questions.**

**(See the APCo handout at the end of this newsletter.)**

# May City Council Meeting 5/12/2025 (Continued)

## PRESENTATION:

### Grayson Street Area Downtown Improvements



#### Destination By Design and Main Street Director Ryan

Destination by Design has been working on final design plans for several Downtown improvement projects, including improvements along Grayson Street. The City is currently waiting to hear if a grant request will be approved for the Grayson Street project while other grants and potential funding sources are pursued. The firm also hosted a two-hour drop-in session for residents from 4:00PM-6:00PM at the Municipal Building to accept public reactions to the proposed project.

**City Council heard the presentation and asked questions, as deemed appropriate. At the end, Council adopted the Conceptual Design presented by Destination by Design for Downtown improvements**

## PRESENTATION:

### Proposed State Bonus for DSS

The Commonwealth has adopted a plan that provides a 1.5% one-time bonus for all local DSS workers. To receive this bonus on behalf of the City Social Services, the City will need to set and hold

a public hearing to adopt an ordinance allowing such funding to be received and then outflowed from the City to the local DSS.



#### DSS Director Amber Quinney

## PRESENTATION:

### Proposed FY2026 City Budget

City Manager Burnette presented the Council's Finance and Audit Committee draft budget. The Finance and Audit Committee has been working with Staff over the past few months to transform the City Manager's budget proposal into a draft final budget that is now being recommended by the Committee to the Council. Mr. Burnette outlined the Committee's proposed budget and answered questions from Council. Council was asked to call a special meeting on June 2<sup>nd</sup> to receive public comments on the budget and will then plan to adopt the budget at its regular meeting on June 9<sup>th</sup>.

**At the end, Council set public hearings as required at a special called meeting on June 2nd to receive public comments on the proposed FY2026 budget and to plan on taking action on the final budget on June 9th.**

## OLD BUSINESS

### • Discussion regarding Special Use Permit for Storage at 200 West Old Town Street –

Public Hearings were held by the Planning Commission and City Council on March 4, 2025 and March 17, 2025 respectively to receive comments on the following zoning request: David Wilson (Applicant) has requested a Conditional Use Permit to construct rental storage units in a B-2 General Business District based on classification as a 'Storage Warehouses' per Section 160-93.G of the City Zoning Ordinance. The units are proposed to be used for storage of campers, boats, and RV's. The structure is intended to be a metal building similar to the existing metal building located on the adjacent site also constructed and owned by the Applicant. The site layout was presented to the Planning Commission during the 3/4/25 Public Hearing indicated a building with six rental units facing Jefferson Street. Concern was noted by the Planning Commission regarding maneuverability of vehicles for backing into the storage units which identified the need for the Applicant to construct a new site entrance from Jefferson Street that would impact at least two public parking spaces. The Planning Commission tabled the Conditional Use Permit request due to outstanding questions regarding the definition of 'Storage Warehouse' and the City's response to the Applicant's intention to modify the sidewalk and street parking. An alternative site layout was presented to the Planning Commission during

# May City Council Meeting 5/12/2025 (Continued)

a later 4/22/25 meeting indicating the building being rotated to face Oldtown Street to resolve the maneuverability issues and to eliminate any impact upon public parking. Removal of the existing sidewalk on Oldtown Street and replacement with a long vehicular curb-cut similar to most of the remaining 200-block of W. Oldtown Street will be required to accommodate access. The Planning Commission recommended to approve with the stipulation that the sidewalk conversion to a vehicular curb-cut be constructed by the Applicant according to VDOT standards and at no cost to the City, and that the Conditional Use Permit apply to both the subject property (Parcel 55-72) and the Owner's adjacent property (Parcel 55-73-77) where a metal building serving the similar purpose currently exists. City Council was asked to hear the presentation and ask questions, as deemed appropriate.

After hearing the presentation, **Council tabled the request until the next meeting.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grant (Rural Reimagined)**

Rural Reimagined is a grant program administered through Tennessee Tech that provides free Level 2 EV Charging Stations to host sites meeting desired criterion and where the site hosts agree to installation, operation/maintenance, and data sharing for a period of three to five years. The grant also provides reimbursement of installation costs of up to \$2000 per dual charging station. City Staff have

identified two potential installation locations at the public parking area across from the Rex Theater and in Felts Park near the tennis courts northwest corner. Both sites have reasonable electrical service extension capability and Wi-fi availability. An initial Site Assessment Form is required to be submitted by May 30, 2025 for grant consideration. The EV Charging Station installation is required to be completed by October 30, 2025. City Council was asked to hear the presentation and ask questions, as deemed appropriate.

**After hearing the presentation, there was a consensus from Council to submit an application for the program, with the intention of finding the best location based on further investigation by Staff.**

- **Proposed Ordinance to Regulate Retail Locations of Tobacco, Nicotine Vapor, and Hemp**

The City Council of Galax is aware of the potential for harmful impacts to the public health, safety and welfare involved with the sale of tobacco products, nicotine vapor products, alternative nicotine products, and hemp products intended for smoking, especially when those sales occur in close proximity to child day centers and schools. By the Code of Virginia, Council is empowered to enact regulations concerning the operation of certain retail establishments, including without limitation locations selling tobacco products, nicotine vapor products, alternative nicotine

products, and hemp products, and may prohibit such businesses within 1,000 linear feet of certain child day centers and schools. City Manager Burnette provided an overview of this possible initiative.

**City Council heard the presentation and agreed to set a public hearing on the possible adoption of the ordinance during the June 9<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.**

# May City Council Meeting 5/12/2025 (Continued)

## HELPING OUR VIRGINIA NEIGHBORS

We strive to provide customers with reliable, affordable power. We realize some of our customers have difficulty paying their bills and do everything we can to help them maintain their service.



Throughout the year, we promote our **payment plans and assistance options** through social media, bill inserts and targeted emails to customers struggling to pay their bills. These include:



### Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

In 2024, Appalachian Power helped nearly 30,000 Virginia customers access LIHEAP funds to pay their energy bills.



### Payment Extensions & Payment Arrangements

A payment extension is a one-time option that may provide customers with extra time to pay their energy bills. An extended payment arrangement helps customers spread out payments over time to help customers.\* Customers can learn more at [AppalachianPower.com/Assist](https://AppalachianPower.com/Assist).

*\*Due to recent Winter Storms Harlow and Jett, Appalachian Power has relaxed its eligibility requirements for payment arrangement plans through March 31. Customers who would not typically qualify can call Appalachian Power to enroll in up to two arrangements.*



### Average Monthly Payment Plan

The Average Monthly Payment (AMP) plan spreads the costs of heating and cooling over the entire year. That means customers pay roughly the same amount during the winter and summer as they pay the remainder of the year. More information on AMP is at [AppalachianPower.com/AMP](https://AppalachianPower.com/AMP).



### Virginia's Percentage of Income Payment Program (PIPP)

The Percentage of Income Payment Program (PIPP) helps eligible Virginia customers manage their outstanding electric bills. Customers can apply online through CommonHelp, Virginia's online website, by visiting [CommonHelp.Virginia.gov/Access](https://CommonHelp.Virginia.gov/Access); by phone at 855.635.4370; or with a submitted application to the local Department of Social Services in-person, by mail or by fax.



### Neighbor to Neighbor Bill Pay Assistance

The Neighbor to Neighbor Program lends a hand to customers experiencing financial hardships and needing help to get back on their feet. Administered by Dollar Energy Fund, the program provides eligible customers with a utility assistance grant applied directly to their bill.

Appalachian Power collects donations from customers and provides \$250,000 annually from the company to assist customers in need. More information is available at [AppalachianPower.com/Assist](https://AppalachianPower.com/Assist).



### Energy Efficiency Programs

Appalachian Power helps Virginians lower their energy costs by educating its customers on how to lower their energy usage. Some programs available include the Home Performance Program, Bring Your Own Thermostat Program and Low-Income Weatherization Program.

Customers can also view their Home Energy Management (HEM) analysis when logged into their Appalachian Power account. HEM provides energy reports and detailed usage insights, including a Home Energy Analysis, allowing customers to review their energy usage breakdown and savings tips. These online charts and communications are available to residential customers automatically, and customers can manage their energy report preferences online.

More information and a list of all available programs are available at [TakeChargeVA.com](https://TakeChargeVA.com).



### Virginia Disconnection Policy

Similar to other Edison Electric Institute (EEI) members, Appalachian Power will never disconnect a customer during extreme temperatures. Appalachian Power does not disconnect electric service when the National Weather Service predicts temperatures below 32 degrees or above 92 degrees. Customers will also avoid service interruption on Fridays, weekends, legal holidays and the day before a legal holiday.