

**Galax City Council
Minutes
November 10, 2025**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber on November 10, 2025 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, Councilman Robinson.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE – Councilwoman Burnett

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION – PROPOSED WATER PROJECT

Mayor Greene announced a public information session concerning the City's proposed water system improvement project to provide members of the public an opportunity to become acquainted with this proposed project, to be followed by a public comment period to allow members of the public to provide comments and voice any concerns regarding the proposed project. Doug Williams - Director of Planning & Community Development provided an overview of the project, describing an \$8.8 million water project, including upgrades at the water treatment plant, City View pump station, and East Galax pump station, with a total of five locations. The project aims to address urgent issues and is funded by a USDA rural development loan with a 40-year payback. Following this public information session, Mayor Greene opened the floor for public comments on the project. Mr. John Weaver spoke inquired about the bidding process and the potential impact on water and sewer rates for residents. City Manager Burnette explained that the bidding process would be competitive and that the cost of the project was spread over four decades. Councilman Henck questioned the longevity of the improvements and the impact on residents. Mayor Greene and Vice Mayor White discussed the timeline and construction duration of the project. There were no further comments made. Mayor Greene closed the public comment period on the proposed water project.

CITIZEN COMMENTS – None

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of Minutes - Regular Meeting of October 13, 2025
- Approval of October 2025 Financial Reports
- Approval of Request to Hold Public Hearing to Amend the FY2026 Budget
- Approval to Provide Year-End Longevity Bonuses to Employees
- Approval of Agreement with Mount Rogers PDC to Administer CDBG Urgent Need Grant
- Approval of MOU with Mount Rogers PDC to Administer VRA Flood Resilience Grant

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. 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.

OLD BUSINESS

Water System Updates

Consideration of Resolution Regarding Financing of Water Project

City Manager Burnette presented Council with a resolution required to be adopted for the City to move forward with the financing of \$8.8 million from the USDA for the Water Project. The loan resolution authorized the City to take on the envisioned indebtedness as statutorily required. *Vice Mayor White made the motion to approve the resolution 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.*

Proposed Adoption of Environmental Review Record (ERR) for CDBG Urgent Need Grant - City Manager Burnette made a request of Council to adopt the Environmental Review Record as a last piece needed to get under contract with DHCD for the Urgent Need CDBG grant. The grant would fund the purchase and installation of backup generators at the water plant and at two water pump stations.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the ERR as presented. 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.

Request to name Mayor Greene as a certifying officer

City Manager Burnette requested that Mayor Green be certified as our designee, for certifying officer and environmental responsibility certified officer for the CDBG grant.

Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the request 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 Robinson.

Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment Update

City Manager Burnette explained that in October, Council adopted a resolution asking the Planning Commission to work on a specific amendment of the Zoning Ordinance which contained terms which were undefined within the ordinance itself, including the terms “special care hospital,” “general hospital,” and “medical office,” and it was felt that the Zoning Ordinance should be updated to provide appropriate clarification to such terms. Additionally, it was felt that the compatibility of uses permitted within the City should be re-evaluated, specifically with regard to the B2 and R2 districts, and the location of substance abuse treatment facilities within areas designated for general business or residential uses, as opposed to the Business Medical district. Council requested that the Planning Commission initiate a review of this aspect of the Zoning Ordinance on an expedited basis. The Planning Commission held a workshop on the matter on October 28 and is expected to take action on November 18. It is expected that the Planning Commission’s recommendation will come to Council at its December 8 meeting.

Proposed Ordinance to Enact Regulations for Enforcement of Building and Maintenance Code Violations and Incentivize the Abatement or Renovation of Blighted and Derelict Properties

City Manager Burnette explained that in September and October, Staff brought this proposed ordinance to Council for discussion. At the October meeting it was tabled to the November 10 meeting. Questions and concerns revolved around two main issues: the imposition of an added tax assessment penalty for blighted structures and the length of the 15-year abatement of taxes on the increased value of a fixed up property. After consultation with the City Attorney, it was noted that the 15-year abatement was statutorily required if the City enacts this ordinance. It was also noted that the added five to ten percent tax assessment penalty was not a requirement of the legislation. Therefore, the City Attorney has provided another option for Council’s review, an amended proposed ordinance that would remove the tax assessment penalty. The redline draft of this proposed ordinance was presented for Council’s review. Council can approve the original ordinance, the revised ordinance, or no ordinance at all. The importance of annual reviews by the code compliance officer and the need for a survey of derelict and blighted properties was emphasized in council discussion.

Councilman Warr 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 Robinson.

Rex Theater Revitalization Update

City Manager Burnette provided an update for Council on the progress over the past month on the renovation and improvements of the Rex Theater, including an updated schedule of bidding for the Phase 1 project and the results of a weekend concert that encompassed the Rex Lane area as a food and drink addition to the concert. He also discussed the awarding of a contract with Spectrum Design to perform the design work on the Phase 2 project that would include the balcony improvements and ADA accessibility. A request was made of Council to approve the design contract with Spectrum Design for phase two of the RECs renovations that's going to be mainly the balcony ADA compliance, as well as elevator design and historic tax credits. ***Councilman Warr made the motion to approve the contract 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.***

NEW BUSINESS

Current SNAP Benefit Update

City Manager Burnette gave an update to Council on SNAP benefits due to the federal shutdown and much uncertainty about whether or not SNAP food benefits would continue in the short to medium term.

Request to Apply for Various Grants

Grants Administrator McKellop discussed current potential grant opportunities and requested Council's authorization to make applications on the following three grants:

VDOT: Virginia Department of Transportation

State of Good Repair – SGR Local Paving Program - The State of Good Repair (SGR) pavement program provides funding for deteriorated pavement owned or maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation or localities, as approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Ms. McKellop explained that applicants could apply for up to **\$1,500,000 per locality**.

State of Good Repair - Locally Owned Bridges

The State of Good Repair (SGR) bridge program provides funding for NBI bridges in poor condition or in fair conditions. Ms. McKellop explained that Salem District anticipated approximately \$2.3M total in available SGR Local Bridge Funds during this cycle for Salem District.

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Ms. Sara McKellop, Grants Administrator informed City Council of a grant from the Community Flood Prevention Fund. The fund was established to provide support for regions and localities across Virginia to reduce the impacts of flooding, including flooding driven by climate change. The grant would include Stormwater Management Planning and Inventory, Resilient Design Guidelines, Galax Flood Resilience Webpage, and Hospital Secondary Access Feasibility Study.

Councilman Warr made the motion to authorize Ms. Sara McKellop, Grants Administrator to apply for the three grants 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 Robinson.

Discussion of Water Service Policies

Councilman Henck raised concerns about the City's water billing policy, particularly the issue of zero usage bills and multiple bills for individual units in a building. Council and Staff discussed the potential impact of these policies on property owners and tenants, with suggestions to suspend zero usage bills and review the code. Council discussion emphasized the need for further review on such proposed changes to the water billing policy. ***Vice Mayor White made the motion to send the water service policies to be reviewed by the Galax Public Services Committee. 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.***

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

Assistant City Manager Holthouser

- Galax Carroll Grayson Animal Shelter open house successful
- Skate Park improvements being made
- Baseball field improvements meeting
- Flood meeting at Crossroads
- 55K grant for floodwater improvements
- Chestnut Creek – mowing banks discussion
- AEP discussion for area tree trimming

City Manager Burnette

- 50K grant – Workforce Housing Grant for Kipling Lane
- State giving extra half day off on Dec. 24 for employees. *Councilman Warr made the motion to approve as presented, 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.*
- Taking Rollover Budget Requests for 1.7M from City Departments
- Amend May 12 council minutes from the closed session which were never included. *Councilwoman Ritchie made the motion to approve 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 Robinson.*

Councilman Robinson

- Thanked Public Works, GPD, EMS for their hard work in our community.
- Parks and Recreation Committee meeting – improvements being made.
- Thanked everyone for the year he has served on Council – Loves the City.

Councilwoman Burnett

- High School Softball complaints at Mt. View Park
- VML Conference
- Attended E911 Commission meeting
- Galax Grayson EMS discussion
- Loved working with Councilman Robinson and hope to work with him again in the near future.

Vice Mayor White

- Praising GGEMS for helping her mother
- Veteran’s Memorial Ceremony
- SNAP Benefits meeting
- Advisory Board meeting with Life Center

Councilwoman Ritchie

- Discussed VML Conference
- Public Art Murals

Councilman Warr

- No Tourism meeting on Nov. 18

Mayor Greene

- Discussed meeting visitors in Galax

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:26 p.m. Vice Mayor White made a motion to request for a Closed Meeting in Accordance with 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia:

- (A)(1) Discussion of personnel
- (A)(3) Discussion of the acquisition of real property or the disposition of real property

Councilwoman Ritchie seconded, and the motion was 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 9:25 p.m., Councilman Henck made the motion to come out of closed session. Councilman Warr seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by all members present. 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.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:37 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Willie Greene", written over a horizontal line.

Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be a stylized set of initials or a name, written over a horizontal line.

Clerk

