

Galax City Council
Minutes
April 13, 2026

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber on April 13, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. Mayor White called the meeting to order with the following Council members present: Vice Mayor Greene, Councilwoman Ritchie, Councilman Warr, Councilman Henck by phone, Councilwoman Burnett, Councilman Coomes arrived at 7:34pm.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm

PRAYER AND PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE: Councilman Warr lead the meeting with a prayer followed by the pledge of allegiance at 6:07 P.M.

RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT: ROBERT A. IROLER (Wastewater Department)

Mayor White presented a plaque and watch to Mr. Iroler after 35 years of service. She thanked him for his outstanding service and expressed hope that, when he looked at his watch, he would fondly remember his time spent serving the people of Galax.

INTRODUCTION OF JUNIOR MAYORS AND JUNIOR VICE-MAYORS

Mayor White introduced the 4 members of Junior Mayor's and Vice Mayor's.

Junior Mayor Jaycie Pemberton

Junior Mayor Susana Rivera Flores

Junior Vice-Mayor Brody Long

Junior Vice-Mayor Lucas Pineda

RECOGNITION OF MAROON TIDE ATHLETES

Galax Varsity Girl's Basketball, 2026 VHSL Class 1 State Champions

Mayor White read a proclamation for the Girls Varsity Basketball team.

Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the proclamation presented by Mayor White for winning the VHSL girls varsity Class 1 State Championship ever. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to allow Councilman Henck to attend the Council meeting by phone. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Amendment of Certain Water Meter Fee and Requirements (attachment #1)

Mayor White called the first public hearing to order at 6:20 P.M. The floor was opened for public comment.

There was no public comment. Mayor White closed public hearing at 6:22 p.m. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the amendment as submitted in the attachment. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 votes, Councilwoman Ritchie abstained. Councilman Coomes absent, and Vice Mayor Greene voted no.

PUBLIC HEARING: FY 2026 Budget amendment hearing (attachment #2)

Mayor White called the second public hearing to order at 6:22 p.m. The floor was opened for public comment. There was no public comment. Mayor White closed public hearing at 6:25 p.m. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the FY 2026 budget amendments submitted by City Manager Burnette. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Confirmation of Existing Recordation Tax (attachment #3)

Mayor White called the third public hearing to order at 6:25p.m. The floor was opened for public comment.

There was no public comment. Mayor White closed public hearing at 6:27 p.m. The motion passed unanimously. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the confirmation of existing Recordation tax as submitted in attachment #3. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Re-Adoption of 15 MPG Speed Limits (attachment #4)

Mayor White called the fourth public hearing to order at 6:27 p.m. The floor was opened for public comment. Kate Friedel had a concern about the omission of McArthur Street and also that there is not enough signage. City Manager Burnett stated he and Chief Cooper drove the route that will be affected and marked out 4 areas where additional signage is needed. Mayor White closed public hearing at 6:36 p.m. Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to approve the amended speed-limit, Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING #5 Text Amendments to City Code (attachment #5)

Director Doug Williams explained that the proposed changes originated from a February 10, Planning Commission workshop. The updates are not amendments to Chapter 160 (zoning) but instead to Chapters 66 and 75 addressing garbage, rubbish, property maintenance and housing standards. The goal is to clarify definitions and strengthen enforcement within the property maintenance code. A formal definition of clutter was proposed including items such as furniture, appliances containers and other materials and other materials left outdoors that may impact public welfare. Clutter is defined as items not intended for outdoor storage or that accumulate over time (e.g.30-60 days). The updates aim to improve enforcement authority for property maintenance officials. Proposed revisions include: Clearer regulations on trash refuse, and debris accumulation. Definitions and restrictions related to **recreational.

Mayor White called the fifth public hearing to order at 6:36p.m. The floor was opened for public comment. There was no public comment. Public hearing was closed at 6:48 p.m. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the amendments as outlined by the Planning Commission in attachment #5. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. Both motions passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING Zoning Amendments update regarding Recreational Substance, Retail Establishments (attachment #6)

Council held a public hearing regarding a proposed ordinance establishing definitions, standards, and regulations for recreational substances, including location restrictions, operational requirements, and zoning limitations. The ordinance included provisions for setbacks from schools, limits on retail activities and distinctions between on-site and off-site use facilities.

Mayor White called the 6th public hearing to order at 6:48 P.M. The floor was opened for public comment. With no public comments the public hearing was closed at 6:55pm. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the proposed ordinance, Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion, with a discussion clarifying zoning classifications (including B-3 medical Zones.) The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: (#7) Rezoning Request-207 W. Washington St Parcels (55-20 and 55-21) (attachment #7)

Council held a public hearing on a rezoning request for property located at 207 West Washington Street. The Planning Commission recommended approval to rezone the property from B-2 (General Business) to R-5 (Residential/Office) to allow continued residential use and improvements to a nonconforming structure. Mayor White called the 7th Public hearing to order at 6:57P.M. The floor was opened for comment. There was no public comment. The public hearing was closed at 7:07P.M. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the rezoning request and corresponding ordinance amendment. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PRESENTATION FOR WATER AND SEWER, MULTI-YEAR FINANCIAL MODEL AND PROJECTIONS

UPDATE: Kyle Robinson from Davenport Finance presented an overview of the City's multi year water and sewer financial plan, which addresses both operational needs and major capital improvements to the system. The city has identified approximately \$50 million in needed water and sewer improvements over time, with phase 1 projects estimated at about \$11 million. A significant portion of funding is expected through a low interest USDA loan with favorable terms. Since the previous update, the city has successfully secured grant funding, reducing the amount of borrowing needed. Current borrowing needs are estimated at approximately \$6.8 million. Lower than earlier projections. The water and sewer system operates as an enterprise fund, meaning revenues must cover both operating expenses and capital costs. Emphasis was placed on maintaining financial independence from the general fund while ensuring adequate reserves.

Financial trends show, modest revenue growth. Increased expenditures due to inflation and system needs. The importance of maintaining reserves and debt service coverage. (approximately 1.15X)

Current Planning includes, Building and maintaining cash reserves. Funding long-term infrastructure through debt financing rather than operating funds. Spreading costs over time to avoid burdening current ratepayers.

The typical residential usage is estimated at 3000 gallons per month with an average bill of approximately \$41.00 per month. Compared to peer localities, Galax's water and sewer rates are among the lowest even with a proposed increase. The importance of meeting USDA loan requirements, including maintaining sufficient revenues to cover debt service was emphasized. Rate increases may be implemented in advance of loan repayment requirements. The General Fund remains in strong financial condition and while some support has been provided to the utility fund, the goal is to minimize reliance and maintain separation between funds.

CITIZENS COMMENTS: David Bremmer spoke about a proposed event he would like to hold in place of the Smoke on the Mountain event that has been cancelled. Mr. Bremmer stated he would like to hold an event called smoke on the creek on his property located at 1009 S Main St in Galax, and also on the property across the street. He said along with food they have other activities lined up including a motorcycle charity ride in the morning, horseback riding for the kids, a petting zoo, face painting and balloons. Mayor White thanked him for being so involved in the community.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of December 8 2025 and March 2026 minutes (attachment #8)

Approval of March 2025 Financial reports

Declining of VDOT Crosswalk Grant

Request to Accept letters of interest to the Twin County Arts Council

Request to accept letters of interest to the Department of Social Services Board.

Councilwoman Burnett made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Councilman Warr seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Blue Line Solutions Update

Chief Cooper gave an update on the Blue Line Solutions project.

Rosenwald-Felts Building Partnership with Rosenwald Revamped (attachment #10).

Vice Mayor Greene highlighted several upcoming events:

A dinner and music fundraiser hosted by Rosenwald Revival at the municipal golf course club house (tickets available soon)

A workshop on May 26th (10:00am-1:00pm) in downtown Galax, focusing on property development investment opportunities, and revitalization. The event is supported by state agencies and local partners with lunch provided. The event will be recorded for broader access. A downtown fundraising event on June 6th, organized by Downtown Development Group called Galax Grows, was also discussed. Council members and the public were encouraged to attend and support these initiatives.

NEW BUSINESS

Recreation Center, HVAC

Doug Williams presented ongoing issues and proposed improvements related to the Recreation Center HVAC system. The current rooftop units are aging, unreliable, and insufficient, particularly lacking air conditioning. Temporary measures have been used to maintain heat but a long-term solution is needed.

Staff has evaluated replacement options and determined that upgrading to a system that includes air conditioning will require additional electrical capacity and coordination with a generator project already underway. A grant of approximately \$160,000 has been secured for the generator, but adjustments are needed to ensure compatibility with the upgraded HVAC system.

Director Williams requested authorization to proceed with design services through a task order totaling \$48,600. The first two design phases (\$19,950.00) will be funded in the current FY26 budget with the remaining balance to be included in the FY27 budget. The project timeline is critical due to equipment lead times and seasonal considerations. Council approved the motion to execute the design contract as outlined. Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the contract as outlined. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Assistant City Manager Neil Holthouser requested permission to join Virginia WARN (Water wastewater agency response network) a mutual aid agreement for sharing resources during emergencies. Council approved moving forward with agreement pending attorney approval.

Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to approve the request to join Virginia WARN, pending attorney approval. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Staff updates on retirements and personnel changes within the water and wastewater departments.
Public works updates on paving projects and infrastructure improvements throughout the city,
Parks and Recreation updates, including outdoor pool preparation and upcoming golf course centennial planning.
Budget discussions including potential adjustments for baseball funding and economic development incentives.
Announcement of an employee resignation, with plans to seek replacements.
Introduction to a new staff member.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:37 p.m. Councilman Warr made a motion to request for a Closed Meeting in Accordance with 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia: Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Council entered closed session at 8:38p.m.

- (A)(1) Discussion of personnel- Appointments to various boards
- School Board
- CPMT
- FAPT

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

Vice Mayor Green made a motion to return to open session at 9:08p.m. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

All members certified that only the advertised items were discussed in closed session.

Councilwoman Burnett made a motion to appoint Stephanie Ellison, Administrative Coordinator with Strategic - Therapy Associates, as the sub for Amy Vaughan for CPMT when she is unable to attend the meetings, and Tori Smith, Clinical Coordinator with Strategic Therapy Associates, to sub for Kimberly Hamlin for FAPT when she is unable to attend the meetings. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further business at hand, Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:10 p.m.

Mayor

Clerk of Council

