

**Galax City Council
Minutes
June 8, 2026**

Galax City Council convened in regular session in the City Council Chamber on June 8, 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, Councilwoman Burnett, and Councilman Coomes.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor White requested that those in attendance observe a moment of silence in remembrance of fallen Officer Logan Utt.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE

Vice Mayor Greene led the meeting with a prayer followed by the pledge of allegiance at 6:00 p.m.

RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE

Mayor White presented the Galax High School Choir and Band members letters of recognition and a proclamation for earning their first ever Blue Ribbon Award in the VMEA Program. All top eligible performing groups must receive a final superior rating at VMEA District Center Performance Assessment to qualify for this award.

Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to approve the proclamation presented to the Galax High School Choir and Band members. Councilman Warr seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor White opened the public hearing to receive comments from anyone wishing to express support for, or provide comments regarding the City Council's consideration of appointment to the City of Galax School Board.

The following citizens spoke on behalf of Susie Willis, a candidate seeking appointment to the City of Galax School Board:

Roy Markam

Jordan Anderson

Kevin Edwards

Kevin Spurlin

Mayor White closed the public hearing at 6:25 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Steven Archer addressed the Council regarding the fee for a building permit he recently obtained to construct a small deck. He stated that the \$280.00 permit fee was excessive compared to fees charged by surrounding localities and requested that the Council review the current fee scale.

CONSENT AGENDA

- **Approval of May 11, 2026, Minutes**
- **Approval of May 26, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes**
- **Approval of May, 2026 Financial Reports**
- **Setting a Public Hearing to provide a State Bonus to Local DSS Employees**
- **Sale of surplus fire apparatus**
- **Transfer of Downtown Facade Funding to Downtown Galax Grows**
- **Budget Amendment-Transfer Between Funds.**

Vice Mayor Greene stated that paragraph four in the May 11 minutes was inaccurate. He requested that the entire paragraph that begins, "Vice Mayor Greene also shared information about a non-profit meeting focused on upcoming community activities" be removed or revised to accurately reflect the individual who made the statement.

Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the corrections noted by Vice Mayor Greene. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

PUBLIC MURAL UPDATE

Chris Pollins CCSA Director for the City of Galax, presented the two finalist mural designs for the Cornerstone Church, and Jackson Hewlitt buildings. She reviewed the selection process and stated that both artists had been vetted and were fully qualified to complete the installations.

Patti Price-Love and Erica Crookshanks presented the final draft of the mural to be installed on the Barker building. Councilman Coomes expressed concerns that the design did not adequately reflect the community.

Councilman Henck also stated that in his view, Galax is strongly identified with the Blue Ridge Mountains, furniture heritage, and musical traditions, and suggested that a landscape-focused mural would better represent the city. Discussion also included whether modifications to the mural could affect project funding.

Councilwoman Ritchie made a motion to approve the mural. Councilman Warr seconded the motion.

Councilman Henck then made a motion to amend the pending motion by approving a revised mural consisting solely of a landscape design, with the musicians and instruments removed. Councilman Coomes seconded the motion to amend. The motion to amend carried 5-2. The roll call vote was as follows:

Mayor White	Yes
Councilman Henck	Yes
Councilwoman Burnette	Yes
Councilman Coomes	Yes
Councilman Warr	Yes
Councilwoman Ritchie	No
Vice Mayor Greene	No

As amended, the original motion was approved.

PROPOSED ADOPTION OF GALAX SCHOOL BUDGET

Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to accept the City of Galax proposed budget for FY 2026-2027. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. Councilman Henck made the following statement; "I have personal interest in this matter. My wife serves on the City School Board, so pursuant to section 2.2-3115. I will abstain from the vote. The vote carried 6-0 with Councilman Henck abstaining.

PROPOSED ADOPTION OF GALAX CITY BUDGET

Councilwoman Burnette made a motion to approve the Galax City Budget for FY 2026-2027. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion. Councilman Henck made the following statement;" there is a contract in this budget in favor of the office I work for, based on the advice I've received from the State Conflicts of Interest Advisory Committee, I am not required to abstain from voting. The matter does not affect me personally. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation of Various Grant Opportunities.

Virginia Department of Emergency Management Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

Sara McKellop presented information on several grant opportunities available through state and federal agencies. The first Grant opportunity was the VA Dept of Emergency Management Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant program which has recently re-opened for applications.

The proposed project would fund upgrades to the City's designated Emergency Recovery Center located at the Recreation Center, to improve resiliency and code compliance. Proposed improvements include replacement of the

HVAC system, roof repairs, structural reinforcement, ADA-compliant restroom upgrades. Emergency lighting, code-compliant exits and doors, stair repairs and other facility improvements necessary to meet emergency management standards. The Grant application deadline is July 1st and the project will require a 25% local match. The City is requesting approximately \$650,000 in grant funding, and plans to utilize funds previously awarded through a shelter generator grant, toward the required local match. Staff requested Council's authorization to proceed with the grant application.

Councilman Henck made a motion to approve the submission of the BRIC Grant application presented. Councilwoman Burnett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

Council received information regarding a federal grant opportunity through the Bureau of Justice Assistance. (BJA). The grant would provide funding for upgrades to vehicle computer systems used by the Police Department. Evaluation of equipment currently being used showed almost all the equipment is reaching the end of their useful life and requires replacement.

Councilman Warr made a motion to approve the grant application for the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The third Grant Opportunity was for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Council was presented with information regarding a grant opportunity. This grant is a continuation of a previously approved planning grant and would support ongoing community development needs, including housing, infrastructure, economic development and activities benefiting low-to-moderate income residents, as well as the prevention and elimination of blight. Councilwoman Ritchie made a motion to approve the Department of Housing and Community Development Grant Application. Councilman Henck seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

EPA WATER TREATMENT PROJECT GRANT

Council was presented with the final grant opportunity which is a continuation of a previously approved congressional grant. This grant directed spending towards improvements to the City's water treatment system. The original grant application requested \$3 million, and was awarded \$1 million. Following receipt of the award letter, the City must submit a follow up application through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to finalize the funding process, and ensure the project budget and documentation meet federal requirements. The proposed application would continue the previously approved water treatment project, utilizing the awarded \$1 million in funding. The local match requirements and scope of work will remain substantially the same as previously approved by Council.

Councilwoman Burnett made a motion to approve submission of the EPA application for the water treatment project. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Assistant City Manager Neil Holthouser provided an update on the Water Treatment Plant, including the newly painted water tank displaying the City of Galax logo.

He also reported on a recent animal welfare operation in which Animal Protection Services rescued over 45 dogs over the weekend at a single location. Animal Shelter staff extended hours to care for the animals and address their immediate needs.

City Manager Michael Burnette announced the Galax Motel on Stuart Drive is scheduled to be burned on June 16 at 6:00 p.m. The event will serve as a training exercise for firefighters from surrounding localities. He also reported that Virginia's statewide polystyrene (Styrofoam) food service container ban is now in effect and noted that one business has applied for an extension.

Councilwoman Burnett reported that VDOT continues work on the sidewalk installation project throughout the City. She also inquired about deer population control permits that are now expired; and was curious if that would be renewed. Police Chief Cooper stated they are working towards that goal.

Councilwoman Ritchie shared information about the Work-force foundation and opportunities that exist through them,

Councilman Henck gave an update about the development meeting held in May. The event was very well attended

and there is another one scheduled for June 16th at the Cornerstone Church.

Councilman Warr discussed the Golf Course evaluation meeting, and is still trying to work on a date that works for everyone. He will send emails to the invited attendees as soon as a solid date is set.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:17 p.m. Councilman Warr made a motion to request a closed meeting in Accordance with 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia: Councilman Henck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Council entered closed session at p.m. to discuss the following items:

- (A)(1) Discussion of personnel
- (A)(3) Discussion of the acquisition of real property or the disposition of real property.
- (A)(5) Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made.
- (A)(8) Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.
- (A)(29) Discussion of the award of public contract involving the expenditure of public funds where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION

At 9:16 p.m., Councilwoman Burnett made a motion to return to open session. Vice Mayor Greene seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

All members certified that only the advertised business was discussed during closed session.

At 9:18 p.m. Councilman Henck made a motion to authorize City Manager Burnette to purchase the Barker Building, allowing 3% of the purchase price to be used as earnest money while the building is evaluated. The authorized purchase price is \$340,000.00. Councilman Warr seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Mayor Greene made a motion to hold a special City Council meeting July 1st at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of filling the School Board vacancy. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion carried 6-0 with Councilman Henck abstaining.

Council returned to the discussion regarding the proposed mural Following discussion regarding the mural's content and whether it adequately represented the City of Galax. Councilman Henck made a motion to approve the mural with the following modifications: removal of the people and instruments and relocation of the "Galax, Virginia" wording to the center of the mural. Councilman Coomes seconded the motion. The motion carried by vote of 4-3. Roll call vote resulted as follows;

Mayor White	Yes
Councilwoman Burnette	Yes
Councilman Coomes	Yes
Councilman Henck	Yes
Councilman Warr	No
Vice Mayor Greene	No
Councilwoman Ritchie	No

With no further business to come before Council, Councilman Coomes made a motion to adjourn at 9:35 p.m. Councilwoman Ritchie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:55 p.m.

Mayor

Clerk of Council

