

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Gate City Town Council Minutes

July 9, 2024

156 East Jackson Street, Gate City, VA

6:30 PM

I. COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:30 PM BY: Mayor Jamie Lawson

II. ROLL CALL – Town Clerk – Samantha Vargas

	PRESENT:	ABSENT:
Mayor, Jamie Lawson	X	
Vice-Mayor, Tyler Kilgore	X	
Council Member, Wallace W. Ross, Jr.	X	
Council Member, Pat Elliott	X	
Council Member, Dexter Harmon	X	
Council Member, Michele Rusek	X	
Town Manager, Greg Jones	X	
Town Attorney, Michele Brooks	X	

Others present: Anna Barnett; Jason Snapp, Mattern & Craig; Wade Massie, Penn Stuart Law Firm; Kevin Barnett, Scott County Ministerial Association; Mike Still, Kingsport Times-News; Chief Terry Sivert; Sergeant Cody Johnson; Dale McConnell; Quinton Miles

III. INVOCATION – Kevin Barnett: Scott County Ministerial Association

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Sgt. Cody Johnson

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made to approve the July 9, 2024, agenda.

Motion by: Pat Elliott	2nd: Michele Rusek
VOTE: Aye: 5	
Nay: 0	
Absent: 0	
Abstain: 0	

VI. PROCLAMATIONS, CONGRATULATORY RESOLUTIONS, AWARDS, APPOINTMENTS, RESIGNATIONS AND CONFIRMATIONS, ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS.

None

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of June 11, 2024, Town Council Minutes

Motion made to approve minutes as presented.

Motion by: Pat Elliott	2nd: Tyler Kilgore
VOTE: Aye: 5	
Nay: 0	

Absent: 0

Abstain: 0

2. Approval of June 25, 2024, Town Council Minutes

Motion made to approve minutes as presented.

Motion by: Pat Elliott

2nd: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 5

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Abstain: 0

VIII. APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS

Motion made for approval for payment of bills for July 2024 as presented.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd: Pat Elliott

VOTE: Aye: 5

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Abstain: 0

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT (Will be limited to 3 minutes per speaker.)

1. Anna Barnett: Scott County Historical Society, 137 East Jackson Street. 1) Stated that Gate City Frontier, Inc. has identified the wall facing Broadwater Drug has been named as a location for a mural. The wall is damaged and will need repairs prior to the mural project. 2) The Historical Society is developing a museum on the second floor and wants the Town to remove items that have been stored.

Greg Jones, Town Manager, stated that the Town is repairing the wall next to the area in question. This project will need to be completed first. Greg Jones stated that stored items will be removed.

Mayor Lawson closed the public comment session at 6:35 PM and opened the consent agenda session.

X. COMMUNICATIONS

No Communications

XI. REPORTS (All reports given will be included with your packet. Any questions about the reports will need to be discussed with the department head PRIOR to the meeting.)

A. Engineer Status Report

VDH Backup Generator Project: Project is considered 35% complete currently. VDH has approved the original Categorical Exclusion request for public comment. The CE has advertised for public comment (ran in Kingsport Times on 7/2 and 7/9). The public comment period has closed and official CE approval was received from VDH on 11/30. VDH has indicated the needed water pump station in the Williams Mill Tank area can be added to the project in place of the one we removed from the project previously. The design can be part of the VDH funding project, but the survey will be the responsibility of the Town since it was not originally included in the budget. The CE will have to be readvertised to include the new location. The survey field work for the Williams Mill Pump Station was completed on 3/6/24. The CE request has been advertised in Kingsport Times for two consecutive

weeks (5/5/24 and 5/12/24) per VDH guidelines. Project design is ongoing, pump stations are designed and we are awaiting pump curves from the manufacturers to finalize those designs.

Kane St. Sidewalk Transportation Alternatives Funding Application: The Town, VDOT, and M&C had a virtual call on Tuesday, June 4th to discuss progress and specifics of the 30% design submittal. Plans are currently at the 30% complete stage and have been submitted to VDOT for official review. There are various ROW and Utility conflicts that will have to be resolved going forward. M&C to schedule a meeting with Town Manager and Mayor to discuss the best process to approach the required easement acquisition.

Manville Road Highway Safety Improvement Plan Funding Application: The Town, VDOT, and M&C had a virtual call on Tuesday, June 4th to discuss progress and specifics of the 30% design submittal. Plans are currently at the 30% complete stage and have been submitted to VDOT for official review. There are various ROW and Utility conflicts that will have to be resolved going forward. M&C to schedule a meeting with Town Manager and Mayor to discuss the best process to approach the required easement acquisition.

Retaining Wall Construction Plans (Walgreen's Parking Lot): Design is nearly complete (90%). Plans will be finalized and submitted to the Town. The next phase will be to work out the needed access easement with the adjacent property owner.

B. Gate City Frontier Report

Council Member Pat Elliott stated that Mrs. Leslie Crawford is on vacation and could not be in attendance tonight. Mr. Elliott is the ex-officio officer on the Gate City Frontier, Inc. Board. Council Member Pat Elliott stated that at least one employee should be at each event with the trash truck to help keep the event area clean. Greg Jones, Town Manager, stated that the additional labor will drive overtime cost. Council indicated that providing the additional labor for the events is acceptable. Council Member Michele Rusek stated that Gate City Frontier, Inc. should be using volunteers but understands that not all the volunteers were available. Council Member Pat Elliott stated that two public works employees should be on hand during the events.

The merchants on Jackson Street have been asked to water the plants that have been planted in the planters when needed. Some of the merchants are helping to maintain the plants and others are not. Council Member asked Public Works to check on getting a pump and use our water tank to help water the flowers.

Council Member Wallace W. Ross, Jr. stated that there was not any trash can in front of the library. Town Manager Greg Jones stated he would investigate it.

Council Member Pat Elliott stated that the Town needs public restrooms.

Council Member Pat Elliott stated that Grogan Park needs new Playground Equipment.

Council Member Wallace W. Ross, Jr. stated that the bathrooms close to the baseball fields are backing up. Town Manager Greg Jones stated he will investigate. Council Member Michele Rusek asked if the bathrooms are locked at night. Council discussed locking the bathrooms at night. Council Member Tyler Kilgore stated that is why the new security cameras were installed.

I. Foundational Growth and Organization with GCF

- Exploring Main Street Community Interchange meeting scheduled.
- GCF received word that the FY25 Community Vitality grant was fully funded at \$15,000 with a 2:1 match being met by GCF.
 - This grant will help to complete the "Gate City Proud Project" on Jackson Street regarding streetscape and placemaking.

- This will allow us to rework all ground planters to a safe and more uniform appearance, as well as adding in market umbrellas to the current picnic tables, and bringing art to the downtown GCF footprint.
- We are awaiting information regarding the theater deed before we move forward with our committee for that project. We are anxious to get started and very grateful to the Town of Gate City for working with us to make this a reality.

II. Business & Community Outreach

- Planning alongside local stakeholders for our two upcoming community outreach events. The Red, White, and Blue Bash; The After Party and the Back to School Bash. We currently have over 40 local stakeholders working alongside us for these events.
- GCF has worked to try to publicize local businesses on social media as a support for the slow summer season. Downtown businesses are in need of town support in regards to advertising and exposure. As talked about before, a sign on Highway 23 would be an exceptional way to funnel tourists into Gate City as they are traveling through.
- Excited to announce that six new businesses have chosen to call Gate City their home. GCF has reached out to all and to help them get publicity from the newspaper.

III. Events

Upcoming Events: Red, White, & Blue Bash: The After Party July 6th, Back to School Bash August 3rd, Harvest Moon Celebration September 21st.

C. Town Manager's Report

- **Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD): Park Street Housing Rehabilitation Project: Phase II**

Phase two of the Park Street project includes the rehabilitation of five housing units, the substantial reconstruction of one unit and the clearance and demolition of one blighted unit, serving nineteen low- to moderate-income persons.

December 2022 – DHCD was awarded funding for the Phase II Park Street Housing Rehabilitation Project on November 16th, 2022.

Funding Awarded:

DHCD: CDBG:	\$687,968
AEP	\$35,000
Town (In-Kind)	\$12,000
Total	\$734,968

March 2024 – The monthly Management Team and Rehabilitation Board meetings have been changed to the second Tuesday of each month. We did not have a quorum for February's meeting.

May 2024 – The Management Team and the Housing Oversight Rehab Board voted to approve the rehabilitation of 326 Park Street and 308 Park Street.

- **Dog Park Project**

August 2023 – The Planning Commission noted that the fence is damaged again due to a fallen tree. The Planning Commission also indicated that the latches on the fence were not closing properly. Factory to You Fence will be working to correct these issues. The Planning Commission is currently working on sign development and placement, placement of concrete benches, developing rules that will be posted onsite, and placing three dog waste stations.

February 2024 – Factory to You Fence has completed the repairs to the fence. The sign project can be incorporated into a planning grant from the Tobacco Commission and Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

July 2024 – Council has awarded \$5,000 in funding through the FY 2025 budget for this project. The Planning Commission will be moving forward in developing signage and amenities for the dog park in the coming months.

- **Department of Criminal Justice System (DCJS)/ARPA Funding Grant**

April 2023 – The Town was allocated \$152,000 through DCJS/ARPA funding. The Town submitted the grant application on March 24th, 2023. Below is our budget:

Item	QTY	Cost/Each	Vendor	Budget
Axon in Car Cameras x5	5	\$ 9,685	Axon	\$ 48,425
Axon Taser 10's x4	4	\$ 4,827	Axon	\$ 19,308
Star Chase GPS x2	2	\$ 9,983	Starchase	\$ 19,966
Less Lethal Wilson Shotguns x3	3	\$ 1,207	Wilson's Combat	\$ 3,621
Handgun's with red dot x4/holster/light	3	\$ 1,155	Craig's Firearm Supply	\$ 3,465
Grogan Park Cameras	10	\$ 3,743	SCTV	\$ 37,430
Police Department Cameras	8	\$ 2,440	SCTV	\$ 19,520
Total				\$ 151,735

December 2023 – SCTV has informed the town that the equipment has been received. SCTV anticipates installation to be completed in January or February 2024.

February 2024 – The security cameras for the Town Hall have been installed. We are expecting the security cameras for Grogan Park to be installed in a few weeks.

May 2024 – The security cameras for Grogan Park have been installed. The in-car cameras have been installed and the new tasers have been received. The training for the new tasers will be completed shortly. This grant will be closed in in early June 2024.

- **Virginia Tourism Corporation: Marketing Leverage Grant**

March 2023 - The Town applied for the VTC's Marketing Leverage Grant. The proposed funding will be used to create a new website for our tourists: YourGateCity.com. The proposed funding will also include marketing and web page utilization funds for the new website. The total funds requested for the project are \$15,000 with a 50% match from the Town.

December 2023 – VTC has awarded \$10,000.00 to the Town for this project.

July 2023 – This project is nearing completion. We have received positive feedback for both the Town and visitor websites. Corporate Image, Inc. is currently working on our business directory.

- **Request for Proposals: Scott County Historic Society Building and Wall Repair**

May 2023 - The deadline for the RFP has been extended to April 5th, 2023. We did not receive any proposals. A local contractor is interested in the project but wants engineering plans for the drainage. Council has approved Mattern & Craig to develop a drainage plan. A new RFP will be developed once the drainage plan is complete.

September 2023 – Council has accepted Mattern & Craig, Inc. proposal to manage the project under the Town’s GES contract.

December 2023 – Mattern & Craig has completed the survey on the property and is currently working on designing the project. Currently awaiting on property owners to decide on easements issues.

April 2024 – The property owner has approved a construction easement but not a permanent easement.

July 2024 – Plans are 90% complete.

- **Decorative Street Light Removal**

June 2024 – AEP will be installing the new LED lights to their poles on Jackson and Water Street starting in late July. AEP will install a few lights at a time. Our Town Crew will remove the decorative lights as AEP progresses.

- **United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) COPS Hiring Grant**

June 2024 - The COPS grant is due on June 12th, 2024. The application has been completed and will be turned in on time.

July 2024 – The COPS grant was completed and submitted. We are expecting award notices to be received around October 2024.

- **Water Street Parking Lot Development Project**

July 2024 – Spectrum Designs, LLC has completed a couple of site plans. They need feedback. I am currently working on scheduling a meeting time for the Economic Development Committee to meet with Spectrum Designs. *Note: ARPA funding must be spent or under contract by December 31st, 2024.

- **2024 Comprehensive Plan**

July 2024 – The Comprehensive Plan for Gate City is due by December 31st, 2024. The Planning Commission will need to adopt by December 3rd, 2024. Town Council will need to conduct a Public Hearing and adopt on December 10th, 2024. Both Council and the Planning Commission will receive draft copies by the beginning of November 2024.

- **Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant**

July 2025 – The Town has been awarded the DCJS Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant. The funding will be used to purchase and install mobile data terminals in five of our patrol vehicles. The total value of the grant is \$25,169.00.

D. Attorney Report: No Report

E. Council Reports (Any new business from Committees that needs to come before the Council.)

Patt Elliott: No Report
Tyler Kilgore: No Report
Michele Rusek: No Report
Wallace W. Ross, Jr. : The grass and debris around the VDOT storm drain on Manville Road needs to be cleared.
Dexter Harmon: There is a lose decorative streetlight in front of the Dollar Store.

F. Police Department: Stated that the Neighborhood Watch meeting was held on June 18th, 2024. Also reported speeding on Jackson Street and pedestrian visibility. The next meeting is on July 16th, 2024.

Sargeant Cody Johnson informed Council of a domestic shooting on June 12th, 2024 near Pal's on Jackson Street. The shooter has since been arrested.

Sargeant Cody Johnson thanked Council for allowing him to serve in the capacity of Acting Chief of Police. The new Chief of Police, Terry Sivert, will be sworn in tomorrow.

G. Sanitation Authority: New Chairperson, Jan Meade, was elected by the board members. The board is still needing another member. The next meeting will be on October 14th, 2024.

H. Public Works: The Public Works picked up 157,770 lbs. of trash and 3,840 lbs. of brush; responded to 104 work orders and fixed two water leaks for the month of June. Public Works report is filed.

XII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

No Unfinished business

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Workshop with GCF on August 12th, 2024 at 6.00 PM

Motion by: Patt Elliott 2nd: Dexter Harmon
VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay: 0
Absent: 0
Abstain: 0

2. Approval: Create RFP to place mural on Retaining Wall at 390 Kane Street

Motion by: Dexter Harmon 2nd: Pat Elliott
VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay: 0
Absent: 0
Abstain: 0

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT – NEW BUSINESS

No Public Comments

XV. CLOSED SESSION

Motion made for Council to enter into closed session to discuss 1.) Personnel Matters

2.) Legal Matters

Motion by: Dexter Harmon 2nd: Tyler Kilgore
VOTE: Aye: 5
 Nay: 0
 Absent: 0
 Abstain: 0

Mayor Lawson opened the closed session at 6:41 PM

XVI. RETURN FROM CLOSED SESSION

Motion made for Council to return from closed session.

Motion by: Pat Elliott 2nd: Tyler Kilgore
VOTE: Aye: 5
 Nay: 0
 Absent: 0
 Abstain: 0

Council returned from closed session at 7:50 PM.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING – Read by: Town Attorney Michele Brooks

WHEREAS, the Gate City Town Council has convened a Closed Meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-7312 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Town Council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gate City Town Council hereby certifies that to the best of each member’s knowledge, (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirement by Virginia law were discussed in closed meeting to which this certification applies and (2) only such business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Gate City Town Council.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aye: Jamie Lawson, Tyler Kilgore, Michele Rusek, Pat Elliott, Dexter Harmon, Wallace W. Ross, Jr.
Nay: 0
Absent: 0
Abstain: 0

XVII. MOTIONS FROM CLOSED SESSION:

- Increase hourly wage to \$18.50/hour for employee number: 100685.
Motion by: Tyler Kilgore 2nd: Wallace W. Ross, Jr.

