

WORKSHOP MINUTES

Gate City Town Council
Gate City Frontier, Inc
August 12, 2024
156 East Jackson Street, Gate City, VA

I. WORKSHOP MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:00 PM BY: Mayor Jamie Lawson

II. ROLL CALL – Deputy Town Clerk – Lisa Loggins

	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	

Gate City Frontier, Inc: Leslie Crawford - Executive Director, Donnie Alley- Chairman, Mark Jenkins - Vice Chairman, Kevin Helms - Treasurer, Vikki Roberts - Secretary, Pat Elliot - Ex-Officio, Evan Crawford, Joan Cross, Steve Adkins, Kevin Barnett

III. Mayor Jamie Lawson opened the workshop with representatives from Gate City Frontier, Inc. This is a follow-up meeting from the workshop that was held with Gate City Frontier, Inc. on January 8th, 2024.

Town Manager Greg Jones stated that from our workshop meeting held on January 8th, 2024, the following projects were prioritized:

1. Decorative Street Light Replacement
2. Gate City Theater Development
3. Wayfinding Signs
4. Parking Lot Development on Water Street

Greg Jones gave an update on the priority task items:

1. The Town Council has approved the removal of the decorative streetlights. AEP will be installing new LED lights on their light poles starting in late September. AEP will install four or five at a time. The Town will follow and remove the decorative streetlights as the new LED lights are installed.
2. The Town has donated the Gate City Theater property to Gate City Frontier, Inc. Gate City Frontier, Inc. will be taking the lead on that development project.
3. The Town will be applying for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to pay for the planning of the Water Street development project and the Professional Engineer Report (PER) required by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for the Wayfinding Signs project.

4. The Economic Development Committee met with Spectrum Designs, Inc., which developed concept drawings for a community park on Water Street. The concept drawings were shown to representatives from Gate City Frontier, Inc. Some of the planned amenities are: an outdoor stage, basketball court, pickleball court, skate/pump track, electric vehicle charging stations, bathrooms, and a splash pad.

Vikki Roberts asked if it was a splash pad or a water feature. Mrs. Roberts asked how large it is. Greg Jones stated he did not have the exact measurements. Mrs. Roberts stated that a water feature just has water shooting up. Mrs. Roberts asked if the basketball courts were added after the workshop meeting in January. Greg Jones stated it was added last week.

Greg Jones asked if anyone had any comments on the concept drawings as presented. Mayor Lawson stated that instead of two basketball courts, there should be one basketball court and a skate/pump track. Mrs. Roberts asked if the Town had insurance for a skate/pump track. The Town would be covered through our insurance carrier. Town Attorney Michele Brooks stated that several municipalities have a skate park. Leslie Crawford stated that a pump track could be used for skateboards and bicycles.

Mrs. Roberts stated she did not see the place for electric vehicle charging stations. Dexter Harmon stated it is in the corner. Greg Jones stated that the concept drawing is not the final design. The Town has the opportunity to install electric charging stations through a third party at no cost.

Gate City Frontier, Inc. asked what the engineering cost on this was. Greg Jones stated that we do not know yet. The initial funding for the project will come from the Town's ARPA funding allocation. Mrs. Roberts said Pat Elliott had stated that there isn't any ARPA funding for the replacement of the decorative streetlights; it was used for something else. Greg Jones stated that the Town has not spent all the ARPA funds. Pat Elliott stated that he was incorrect about that. Dexter Harmon stated that to replace the decorative streetlights would cost \$1.5 million. Greg Jones stated that there is \$1.1 million in remaining ARPA funding.

Mrs. Roberts stated that we are moving everything off Jackson Street to Water Street, which is not part of the Main Street program. The proposed project is not all-season entertainment. Mrs. Roberts stated that the biggest "gripe" about the theater was that it could not be used all season. Mrs. Crawford stated it would be fantastic to link the Water Street project to Jackson Street. Mrs. Crawford expressed concern that the project on Water Street will look nice, but Jackson Street looks horrible. Mrs. Crawford also stated that she was told there were no plans to remove the ground wires once the decorative streetlights were removed. Greg Jones stated that the decorative streetlights will be removed in phases as the AEP LED lights are installed. Mr. Elliott stated that at the time of our last meeting, we didn't have plans to remove the decorative streetlights. Mr. Elliott suggested using Antique Street to link the proposed project on Water Street to Jackson Street. Mrs. Roberts stated that the Town must have a 'connecting vision' for this project. It's not something we should do 15 years down the road. Mr. Elliott asked: What do you want the money spent on? Mrs. Roberts stated that we love the proposed park project. We need to look like a great town all over. Greg Jones stated that we are not going to be able to do that in an all-in-one project. The Town will need to phase these projects in. Mrs. Roberts stated that the Town should have someone on staff whose primary role is mowing the grass and picking up the trash. The upkeep is not being done. Mayor Lawson stated that this isn't just the Town's responsibility; businesses also have a responsibility to maintain the area in front of their businesses.

Mayor Lawson stated that when he was running for Mayor, the residents in town told him that they want beautification done, pickleball courts, and a splash pad. We need to provide something for the kids to do.

We have a beautiful park, but every time it rains, it floods. We need to come together. This is what the residents want. We do not have the funding to spend \$1.5 million to replace the decorative lights. If we did and spent it all on one thing, what do we have left? There are more things we need to do besides lights. The new LED lights were installed near the Fire Department, and it is as bright as it can be. This is a starting point for us to come together and share ideas.

Mrs. Roberts stated that we have a few buildings in the commercial district that are not being maintained by the property owners. Mrs. Brooks stated that the Town is a complaint-driven town. The Town will need a formal complaint to be submitted before it will proceed. Mr. Steve Adkins stated that he researched the state code and said nuisance laws could be applied. Who is going to take the risk of making a formal complaint? These issues bring down the value of everyone's property. If we take the emotion out of it, we don't have an 'either-or' conflict. We need to proceed with 'baby steps' and continue to improve Jackson Street. Let's do this project now and continue these other projects down the road.

Mayor Lawson closed the workshop at 7:22 PM.



Jamie Lawson – Mayor



Deputy Town Clerk – Lisa Loggans