

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Gate City Town Council Minutes

March 11, 2025

156 East Jackson Street, Gate City, VA

6:30 PM

I. COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:42 PM BY: Mayor Jamie Lawson

II. ROLL CALL – Town Clerk: Kristie Tipton

	PRESENT	ABSENT
Mayor, Jamie Lawson	X	
Vice Mayor, Kevin Barnett	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: Zane Scott; Rebecca Scott; Mike Still, Kingsport Times News; Mark Jenkins; Tucker Begley; Maria Barnett; Anna Barnett; Gabe Edmunds, Scott County Virginia Star; and Quentin Miles.

III. INVOCATION – Kevin Barnett

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Terry Sivert

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made to approve the March 11, 2025, agenda.

Motion by: Michele Rusek

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

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

Quentin Miles – was presented an appreciation plaque from Mayor Lawson and the Town Council in recognition for his unwavering commitment to “Miles for Diabetes”.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of February 11, 2025, Public Hearing Minutes

Motion made to approve minutes as presented.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon
VOTE: Aye: 3
Nay:
Absent: 2
Abstain:

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

**Motion Carried*

2. Approval of February 11, 2025, Town Council Minutes
Motion made to approve minutes as presented.

Motion by: Michele Rusek
VOTE: Aye: 3
Nay:
Absent: 2
Abstain:

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

**Motion Carried*

VIII. APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS

Motion made for approval for payment of bills for March 2025 as presented.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon
VOTE: Aye: 3
Nay:
Absent: 2
Abstain:

2nd by: Michele Rusek

**Motion Carried*

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

X. 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 – Jason Snapp, Mattern & Craig

VDH Backup Generator Project: Project design is complete, and plans and specs have been submitted to VDH Central Office for review. The required easements to facilitate the project have been delivered to the Town for acquisition. The CE approval for the final project has been granted by VDH and the project is cleared for environmental purposes. The Towns FY 23 audit has also been completed which is a requirement of the VDH funding as well. We have received comments from VDH FCAP and VDOT which have been addressed and resubmitted. M&C met onsite with VDH to review on Tuesday, November 12th. Project should go to construction in the spring pending VDH approval and easement acquisitions progressing accordingly. VDH has requested that the PER be updated to match the final design plans, these efforts are in process.

Kane St. Sidewalk: 60% plans are in process. M&C is in the process of utility coordination and ROW coordination. Other current tasks include coordination with VDOT concerning the H/C ramp at the intersection of Kane St. and Jackson St. The VDOT requested cost analysis between the ramp and stairs options has been submitted to VDOT for review.

Manville Road Sidewalk: 60% plans are in progress. There will be a ROW phase for this particular project to address the needed Slope and Construction easements for the project. This will add approximately 12 months to the project timeline. M&C and the Town will need to reach out to each property owner to discuss options. The Town will need to send letters for VDOT to gain access to each affected property per VDOT's request as well, M&C is in the process of compiling these letter for the Town's distribution.

Retaining Wall Construction Plans (Walgreen's Parking Lot): Design is nearly complete with the exception of working out drainage onto the adjacent parking lot. M&C is working to coordinate the needed construction easement with the owner. A Const. Easement Exhibit has been delivered to the owner's attorney for review.

B. Gate City Frontier Report – Included with Council Packet (Mark Jenkins represented)

C. Town Manager's Report – Greg Jones

- **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 people.

December 2022 – DHCD has 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

February 2025:

326 Park St: Rehab Project: Windows, exterior doors, reflooring, new electrical, service HVAC, and cleaning. - The initial work using CDBG funds is completed. We were given an exception to put in handrailing's and steps, in which has been completed.

347 Park St: Rehab Project: Roof and HVAC – The initial work using CDBG funds is completed.

308 Park St: Rehab Project: Repair porch, foundation, guttering, install windows, bathroom repairs, etc – Scheduled to begin construction this week.

309 Park St: Demolition – Ready for the bidding process.

- **Dog Park Project**

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.

- **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. Town Council has approved Mattern & Craig to develop a drainage plan. A new RFP will be developed once the drainage plan is complete.

March 2025: Construction Easement has been submitted to the property owner's attorney for review. The design except for the drainage issue is nearly complete.

- **VDH Backup Generator Project – WSL 007-21**

November 2024 – I am currently working with the Virginia Resource Authority (VRA) to close on the backup generator project. VRA has requested data to assist them with their credit analysis. This will be completed in the next couple of weeks.

December 2024 – All of the documents VRA requested have been submitted. We are expecting to close this project very soon.

January 2025 – The required easements needed for this project were turned over to Town Attorney Michele Brooks on January 14th, 2025, to prepare deeds.

March 2025 – Project design is complete and submitted to VDH for review. This project is expected to close with the VRA soon.

- **Decorative Street Light Removal**

December 2024 - AEP has installed the new LED lights on Jackson Street. The decorative lights have been turned off to see the lighting coverage with the new LED lights. We will start the decorative streetlight removal process shortly.

February 2025 – Clinch Mountain Contractors will begin removing the decorative streetlights once the weather becomes warmer. Warmer weather is needed for the concrete work needed for the junction boxes.

March 2025 – The old decorative streetlights in the downtown area have been removed.

Council Action: Approve auction old streetlights on Govdeals.com.

- **Water Street Parking Lot Development Project**

December 2024: Council has approved the construction contract with Quesenberry Construction for the Phase I of the Community Park Development Project on Water Street.

I met with Quesenberry Construction and Spectrum Designs on December 4th, 2024, and discussed the following:

Pickleball Courts

The design team has proposed a modification that would allow us to include four pickleball courts instead of the originally planned two. The courts can be reoriented so that, if the Town decides to repurpose the area in the future, it can be converted into two tennis courts. While this redesign will slightly extend into the green space, the overall cost will remain the same.

Basketball Court and Surface Colors

We also discussed the basketball court and need to decide between a concrete base with a rubber coating or an asphalt base with a rubber coating. I have reached out to Leslie to see if she can contact Matt McClung for his input, but I would appreciate your feedback as well.

In addition, we have the option to choose the colors for the surfaces of the pickleball court, basketball court, and skatepark. A suggested option is to use a color resembling "Gate City Blue" to create a cohesive and branded look for the park.

Skate Park Layout Options

The team also presented three different layout options for the skate park, designed to align with low-, medium-, and high-range budget levels. I would recommend going with the middle-range option, as it offers a good balance between features and cost. If Council chooses, we can always add additional amenities later as funding allows.

Fencing and Lighting

There was discussion about adding fencing around the pickleball and basketball courts. Since fencing was not included in the Phase I budget, I have asked the contractors to draft a separate engagement for this addition.

On the topic of lighting, I will be meeting with AEP to gather their feedback on options for the park to ensure adequate and cost-effective lighting throughout.

Cost-Saving Opportunity

The team identified a potential cost-saving measure. The asphalt area between the parking lot and green space—currently reserved for a future stage—could be left as is for now and used as a temporary space for food trucks until we move forward with stage construction. This could be a practical, interim solution that enhances usability in the short term. Quesenberry Construction will inspect the existing asphalt to see if this can be done.

February 2025 – We need to plan a field trip to visit area pickleball courts soon. Please let me know a date that will work for everyone.

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

Both the funding match for the Kane Street Sidewalk Project and the Phase I of the Community Park Development Project are under contract. The remaining ARPA funds have been obligated. The two projects must be completed by December 31, 2026. The Treasury portal opens for reporting on April 1, and the signed contracts that demonstrate the obligation must be submitted by April 30th, 2025.

- **2024 Comprehensive Plan**

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

November 2024 – The Comprehensive Plan is expected to be complete in early January 2025.

- **Kane Street Mural Project**

December 2024 – The Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed design with one minor change. The lettering 'Town Gate City, VA' has been added for context.

Council Action: Approve the mural design.

January 2025 – Council has approved the mural with a slight change on where to place 'Gate City, VA'. Our next step is to get the permit approvals from VDOT.

February 2025 – We have received a soft approval from VDOT, but they have not sent the Town the required permit application yet.

- **Hurricane Helene – September 27th, 2024**

October 2024 – Hurricane Helene hit Gate City Friday morning, September 27th, 2024. AEP reported that 282,000 customers lost power. The hurricane caused 2,500 spans of fallen wire and damaged equipment, including 585 poles, 315 cross arms, and 150 transformers. Destructive winds and down trees destroyed eighty transmission lines across Appalachian Power's system. The power restoration began on Sunday, September 29th, 2024, with most of the residents' power restored by Thursday, October 3rd, 2024. The Water Plant regained power on Sunday, September 29th, 2024, after being offline for 2.5 days. A voluntary boil water was issued for Estil Heights subdivision and area at higher elevation. The boil water advisory was lifted on Thursday, October 3rd, 2024.

Currently work is taking place to remove fallen trees. FEMA funding for Scott County has been allocated for this storm on Thursday, October 10th, 2024. The Town is presently working to bring in Asplundh Tree Removal Service to Gate City. All downed trees and storm debris should be placed (if possible) at the edge of the road for pickup. Please contact the Town Hall to be placed on the list.

FEMA announced individual assistance funding on October 14th, 2024. Funding can help pay for essential items, temporary housing, home repairs, and other needs due to the hurricane. Residents can call FEMA at (800) 621-3362 or apply online: [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov).

The Scott County Emergency Services Coordinator will be submitting funding requests to FEMA on the Town's behalf.

November 2024 - Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC and Top-Notch Tree Services have been contracted for debris removal. The debris in Big Moccasin Creek alongside Old Nickelsville Highway will be the first area of concern that will be addressed. Once the debris in Big Moccasin Creek is resolved, they will move to the Hillcrest Subdivision and Beverly Circle area. Top Notch Tree Service will also help with the remaining trees that need to be cleared. Residents are encouraged to contact the Town Hall if they have debris from the hurricane that needs to be removed. If possible, the debris should be moved to the curbing for pickup.

December 2024 – Top Notch Tree Service has completed taking down the damaged trees because of the hurricane. Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC is expected to be in town for debris removal soon.

January 2025 - Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC has informed me that they will be in Town on Friday, January 17, 2025, to begin the debris removal process.

February 2025 – On January 15th, 2025, Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC stated that before they arrive on January 17, 2025, they would need a new contract signed with the new rates. By doing this, Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC, repudiated their contract with the Town signed on October 30th, 2024. The contract was not signed as we are now outside the 'State of Emergency.' Had the Town signed the contract outside the 'State of Emergency' without going back to through the procurement

process, we would not have been reimbursed by FEMA. I contacted the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and learned that we can use the state's contractors that were procured under the state's procurement process. Land Debris removal can start in about three weeks. The debris in Big Moccasin Creek will take longer due to permitting that is needed through DEQ. The state's contractors can only pull debris from a utility right of way (ROW), but there is a volunteer group that we may have access to that will help in cleaning private property.

March 2025 – The land debris removal has begun. The debris removal is expected to take a few weeks.

- **FY 24 Town Audit**

March 2025 - Our annual audit is now underway. We are expecting completion by the end of the month.

- **FY 26 Budget**

February 2025 – Our FY 26 Budget process has begun. I have collected the departmental requests for next year's budget. The Street Committee has been given the town street assessment worksheet for their review and recommendation. Our first Finance Committee meeting will be scheduled in early March.

March 2025 – The Finance Committee met on February 25, 2025, and reviewed the department request, proposed life insurance, lower health insurance deductible, wage classification plan and budget calendar. **Council Action:** Approve Budget Calendar, Life Insurance, lower health insurance deductible from \$1,000 to \$500.

D. Attorney Report – No Report

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

Kevin Barnett: Planning Commission recently approved a home occupation application with Scare Sounds with Marty Lane. They design build & sale electronic sound systems intended for haunted attractions and Escape Rooms. It's mostly online.

Mayor Jamie Lawson: The storm debris at Grogan Park has been removed. We are looking at some things to try and improve the beautification of the park – working with a Girl Scout troop who wants to do some community projects so they can earn their pins. They want to plant flowers and do things of that nature at the park. We're working to get signage for the dog park and the Planning Commission is already involved.

F. Police Department – Included with Council Packet

G. Sanitation Authority – Included with Council Packet

H. Public Works – Included with Council Packet

XII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

*Mayor Lawson asked for someone to make a motion to Amend the Agenda to move to Closed Session at this time.

***Motion to amend the agenda to move closed session ahead of New Business.**

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

XIII. CLOSED SESSION

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

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

Mayor Lawson opened the closed session at 7:06 PM.

XIV. RETURN FROM CLOSED SESSION

Motion made for Council to return from closed session.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

Council returned from closed session at 8:49 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: Mayor Lawson, Michele Rusek, Kevin Barnett, Dexter Harmon (Pat Elliott & Wallace W. Ross, Jr. absent).

Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

XV. MOTIONS FROM CLOSED SESSION

- 1. Approve: Kevin Barnett was nominated to be on the GC Sanitation Committee
Motion made to appoint Kevin to the Sanitation Committee.**

Motion by: Michele Rusek

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

- 2. Amend the previous appointments and join the Park and Cemetery committees.
Motion to combine the Park and Cemetery committees into one (Mayor Lawson, Kevin Barnett & Wallace W. Ross, Jr.).**

Motion by: Michele Rusek

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

- 3. Add Good Friday to the Holiday schedule.
Motion to add Good Friday to the Holiday schedule for Town employees – effective immediately.**

Motion by: Michele Rusek

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

XVI. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Approve: Chapter 18-4 Approved Yard Waste Containers Ordinance Amendment.
Motion made to**

Motion by:

2nd by:

VOTE: Aye:

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

**Take No Action, move to April 8th, 2025*

2. Approve: FY 2026 Budget Calendar

Motion made to approve the FY 2026 Budget Calendar

Motion by: Michele Rusek

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

3. Approve: Lower Health insurance deductible for town employees.

Motion made to accept plan to reduce deductible from \$1000 to \$500 dollars. Effective July 1, 2025.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

4. Approve: VRS Life Insurance policy for town employees (100% funding from the Town). Effective July 1, 2025.

Motion made to approve the VRS Life Insurance policy.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

5. Donate: Daniel Boone statue to Scott County Historical Society.

Motion made to donate the Daniel Boone statue.

Motion by: Kevin Barnett

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

6. PTO Policy Amendment

Motion made to add 40 hours PTO and 40 hours sick time, for each employee, each year – effective immediately.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

VOTE: Aye: 3

Nay:

Absent: 2

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

7. Auction approval: The Town will accept sealed bids from the public (per light pole).
Motion made to accept sealed bids from the public.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3
Nay:
Absent: 2
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

XVII. PUBLIC COMMENT – NEW BUSINESS

XVIII. ADJOURN

Motion made to adjourn.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 3
Nay:
Absent: 2
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

*Mayor Lawson adjourned the meeting at 8:59 PM, until the next scheduled Council Meeting on April 8, 2025, at 6:30 PM.



Mayor, Jamie Lawson



Town Clerk, Kristie Tipton