

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Gate City Town Council
April 08, 2025
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: Kristie Tipton

Mayor, Jamie Lawson
Vice-Mayor, Kevin Barnett
Council Member, Wallace W. Ross, Jr
Council Member, Pat Elliott
Council Member, Dexter Harmon
Council Member, Michele Rusek
Town Manager, Greg Jones
Town Attorney, Michele Brooks

PRESENT: ABSENT:

X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X

Others present: Mike Still, Kingsport Times News; Allison Lewis; Jeff Hess, Heart of Appalachia; Anna Barnett; Maria Barnett; Brad Lewis, Gate City Little League; Gabe Edmunds, Scott County Virginia Star.

III. INVOCATION – Father Tim Drake

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chief Terry Sivert

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made to approve the April 08, 2025, agenda.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Pat Elliott

VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

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

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of March 11, 2025, Public Hearing - Town Council Minutes
Motion made to approve minutes as presented.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon
VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

2nd by: Michele Rusek

**Motion Carried*

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

Motion by: Michele Rusek
VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

**Motion Carried*

3. Approval of February 16, 2025, Emergency called Town Council Minutes
Motion made to approve minutes as presented.

Motion by: Pat Elliott
VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

**Motion Carried*

VIII. APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS

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

Motion by: Dexter Harmon
VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

2nd by: Michele Rusek

**Motion Carried*

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT (Limited to 3 minutes per speaker.)

Brad Lewis with Gate City Little League: in November 2024 they took over the use and maintenance of the middle field of the High School. The field has been flooded and needs a lot of work to get it "play ready". They are asking the Town for help paying for some improvements. The Little League needs six 25-ton truckloads of ballfield dirt, and the estimate is \$13,650.00. Mr. Lewis also informed the Council that the AED pads and battery packs that are kept at the Little League and Softball fields are both out of date. Town Manager Greg Jones asked him to order those since they're safety items.

X. COMMUNICATIONS – None

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. PER is expected to be resubmitted for approval the week of 4/7/25.

Kane St. Sidewalk: 60% plans are in process. M&C is in the process of utility coordination and ROW coordination. The VDOT requested cost analysis between the ramp and stairs options has been submitted to VDOT for review and we have received comments. VDOT has requested additional data be included in the waiver request and it be resubmitted. All indications are the waiver will be granted upon resubmission. VDOT is currently working on environmental coordination efforts to satisfy NEPA requirements.

Manville Road Sidewalk: 60% of 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. VDOT is currently working on environmental coordination efforts to satisfy NEPA requirements.

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 in process of preparing a legal description for the required Const. estimate for delivery to the attorney.

B. Gate City Frontier Report – Included with Council Packet

C. Town Manager 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)	<u>\$12,000</u>
Total	\$734,968

February 2025

- **326 Park St: Rehab Project:** Windows, exterior doors, reflooring, new electrical, service HVAC, and cleaning – construction is in progress.
- **347 Park St: Rehab Project:** Roof and HVAC - The initial work using CDBG funds is completed. HVAC work will be using AEP grant funding.
- **308 Park St: Rehab Project:** Repair porch, foundation, guttering, install windows, bathroom repairs, etc. – construction is in progress
- **309 Park St: Demolition -** Asbestos testing will be completed soon. The Rehab Specialist is in the process of searching for a contractor to complete the testing.

- **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.

- **Scott County Historic Society Building: Secure 2nd floor**

April 2025 - The Historic Society informed me of their desire to create a museum on the second floor of the building the Town leases to them. The flooring appears to be unstable in a few areas. I have received one quote from Clinch Mountain Contractors for \$9,871.98 to install additional support jacks in five different locations. I am in the process of getting additional estimates.

- **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.

April 2025 - Council has approved to auction by sealed bids the old decorative streetlights that have been removed. The deadline to submit bids is on April 30th, 2025. About 10 lights have been reserved to install at the walking trail at Grogan Park. I am currently in the process of trying to find a kit that will allow for solar power LED lights.

- **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.

April 2025 - On March 21st, 2025, Vice-Mayor Kevin Barnett and I went on a field trip to Bristol Sportsplex and the Riverview Courts in Kingsport. We were joined by Ms. Lenore Weiss with Spectrum Designs who is working as a sub-contractor for Quesenberry's Construction. Ms. Anna Walters, USA Pickleball District Ambassador and certified pickleball coach, served as our tour guide.

- **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 remaining projects must be completed by December 31, 2026. The Treasury portal opens for reporting on April 1st, and the signed contracts that demonstrate the obligation must be submitted by April 30th, 2025.

April 2025 - The U.S. Department of the Treasury will host a webinar on Wednesday, April 9th, 2025, on the SLFRF Reporting requirements. Barring any complications, I should have the Town's reporting complete by the end of the week.

- **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 completed 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.

April 2025 - VDOT has approved the permit application on March 31st, 2025. I will be meeting with Ms. Madison Ramey, owner of MadrPaints Murals, soon to sign the contract. This project should start soon.

- **Gate City Little League: Batting Cage Roof Replacement**

The batting cage for the Gate City Little League needs to be replaced. We anticipate the cost to be around \$10,000. Mayor Jamie Lawson has identified Walmart's Spark Good as a potential funding source to help offset the cost. Walmart funding can cover as much as \$5,000 towards the project. **Council Action:** approve to apply for the Walmart Spark Good grant program.

- **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 areas 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 1, 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 17th, 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.

April 2025 - In mid-March 2025, the contracted land debris removal crews ceased operations and left Gate City without prior notice. Shortly thereafter, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) notified me that all hurricane-related debris removal activities were to be concluded by April 1, 2025, in accordance with a six- month time limit established for such efforts.

Shortly thereafter Integrated Solutions Consulting, Inc., VDEM's contracted consulting firm, advised that the April 1 deadline was considered a soft deadline and that an extension could be requested. I submitted an extension request on March 31, which was approved, establishing a new deadline of June 30, 2025.

In the meantime, I have been coordinating with World Renew, a volunteer disaster response organization, to assist residents in moving debris to the public right-of-way for collection. We anticipate their mobilization within the next few weeks.

- **FY 24 Town Audit**

April 2025: Our annual audit is underway and should be completed in the next couple of weeks.

- **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 plant and budget calendar.

April 2025: - Council has approved the Budget Calendar. The work process for the FY26 town budget has been delayed by about three weeks due to the ongoing legal issues with the Scott County Public Service Authority Board of Directors and Hurricane Helene debris removal. **Council Action:** Approve a Public Hearing for the proposed FY 26 town budget on May 13th, 2025.

D. Attorney Report – No Report

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

Pat Elliott – Nothing to report

Dexter Harmon – citizens have told him that town looks better with the decorative lights gone. The town looks awesome, and they love the brighter lights.

Kevin Barnett – The Park Committee is working to get 10 of the decorative lights, and they're checking to see if they can find a solar retrofit, to go on the waking path at Grogan Park. SWMA has expressed interest in volunteering to work on the park (like tree stump grinding).

Mayor Lawson – The Park Committee is getting a lot of requests for playground equipment for smaller kids. The mayor is going to speak with Eugene McClellan to see what is available. The sand boxes need changing. Girl Scouts are interested in planting flowers at the park as part of their community projects.

Michele Rusek – nothing to report

Wallace W. Ross, Jr. – The curbs were painted almost a year ago and they are already peeling. Our town has been in the public eye lately, but we still don't have a sign to let people know they're in Gate City.

F. Police Department – Included with Council Packet

G. Sanitation Authority – No Report

H. Public Works – Included with Council Packet

XII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Public Hearing: FY 2026 Budget on June 10th, 2025**
Motion made to advertise the meeting.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 5

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

- 2. Jeff Hess, Executive / Marketing Director, Heart of Appalachia – introduced himself and described how his organization showcases Southwest Virginia, drawing tourists to the region.**

Motion made to

Motion by:

2nd by:

VOTE: Aye:

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

****Take No Action***

- 3. Community Park Design**

Motion made to approve presented design.

Motion by: Pat Elliott

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

VOTE: Aye: 5

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

- 4. Boone Trace 250 Commemorative Relay Hike: Daniel Boone statue presentation**

Motion made to

Motion by:

2nd by:

VOTE: Aye:

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

****Take No Action***

- 5. Miles for Diabetes – Quinten Miles thanked the Mayor and Town Council for being good to him. He reported that there are a lot of potholes on Water Street. He thanked GCPD for keeping a watchful eye on him.**

Motion made to

Motion by:

2nd by:

VOTE: Aye:

Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

**Take No Action*

6. **Appoint Vice Mayor Kevin Barnett to the Sanitation Authority Board of Directors.**
Motion made to appoint Kevin Barnett to the Sanitation Authority Board of Directors.

Motion by: Dexter Harmon

2nd by: Michele Rusek

VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

7. **Grant Funding: Walmart's Spark Good Program: Batting Cage Roof Replacement Project**

Motion made to seek this funding and replace the batting cage roof.

Motion by: Pat Elliott

2nd by: Kevin Barnett

VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

8. **Mowing Contractor RFP: Award Bid**

Motion made to accept bid from Kimbler Enterprises, LLC.

Motion by: Michele Rusek

2nd by: Pat Elliott

VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT – NEW BUSINESS - None

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 by: Pat Elliott

VOTE: Aye: 5
Nay:
Absent:
Abstain:

**Motion Carried*

Mayor Lawson opened the closed session at 7:44 PM

XVI. RETURN FROM CLOSED SESSION

Motion made for Council to return from closed session.

Motion by: Pat Elliott

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

VOTE: Aye: 5

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

Council returned from closed session at 9:37 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, and
Wallace W. Ross, Jr.

Aye: 6

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

XVII. MOTIONS FROM CLOSED SESSION – No motions

XVIII. ADJOURN

Motion made to adjourn

Motion by: Pat Elliott

2nd by: Dexter Harmon

VOTE: Aye: 5
 Nay:
 Absent:
 Abstain:

****Motion Carried***

*Mayor Lawson adjourned the meeting at 9:43 PM, until the next scheduled Council Meeting on May 13, 2025, at 6:30 PM.



Mayor, Jamie Lawson

Town Clerk, Kristie Tipton