Gatlinburg City Commission
October 21, 2025
Meeting Minutes

The Gatlinburg Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. in the City Council Room. All the members were present. Mayor Mike Werner called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Finance Director Robert Holt led the Invocation.

Mayor Werner then called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the regular meeting of September 16, 2025. Vice Mayor Kirby Smith made a motion to approve the Minutes which was seconded by Commissioner Randy Brackins and then unanimously adopted.

Regarding Reports of Boards and Committees, Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau President and CEO Chad Netherland gave the Third Quarter Report. Mr. Netherland opened his report by thanking the City Commission and the City Manager for their work and leadership to keep the Great Smoky Mountains National Park open during the Federal Government shutdown. Mr. Netherland reported that during the third quarter, the GCVB hosted an Artificial Intelligence meeting for its membership for tourism marketing assistance. Mr. Netherland noted that visitation to Gatlinburg.com was down 20% but attributed that to artificial intelligence search results being up 1,000 percent during the third quarter. Also, Mr. Netherland reported the Visit Gatlinburg mobile app sessions were up 253.4 percent, while the social media reach of the Visit Gatlinburg platforms reached over 30 million people during the quarter. Mr. Netherland also reported that Gatlinburg received several accolades during this period, including several from World Atlas. During the third quarter, Mr. Netherland reported that the Convention Center hosted 23 events with over 32,000 attendees.

The City Manager reported and/or requested:

(1) That he wanted to thank the City's Street Department for their recent efforts on several projects, including partnering with the National Park and other City and County agencies to expedite the reopening of the Gatlinburg Bypass and helping expedite the reopening of Cherokee Orchard Road; and,

(2) That he wanted to announce that the 12th annual Gatlinburg Spooktacular will be hosted by the Gatlinburg Recreation Department on Tuesday, October 28 at Rocky Top Sports World; and,

(3) That he wanted to announce that the 37th annual Winter Magic Kickoff and Chili Cookoff will be held downtown on the Parkway on Thursday, November 6 and he would also like to commend all the CVB Staff for this event and all the City Departments for this event and all the hard work they've done to put up the Winterfest Lights; and,

(4) That he also wanted to announce that this year's Veterans Day Celebration will be held on Monday, November 11, beginning at 11 a.m. at Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies plaza. Since the year 2000, Gatlinburg has been designated as an official Regional Site for the Observance of Veterans Day as designated by Veterans Day National Committee and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

New Business:

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A RIGHT-OF-WAY USE REQUEST LOCATED AT 1357 NORTH BADEN DRIVE FOR A PROPOSED PARKING DECK. (Requested by Inti Montoya).

Item A under Old Business was discussion and consideration of approving a Right-of-Way use request located at 1357 North Baden Drive for a proposed parking deck. (Requested by Inti Montoya). Commissioner Chad Reagan made a motion to approve the right-of-way use which was seconded by Commissioner Brackins. The Planning Director explained that the request is regarding permission to permit the construction of a parking deck for an overnight rental and that the proposed plan indicates that the parking for the dwelling will be located upon both private and public property. The Planning Director further explained that the applicant has acknowledged that the use is temporary in nature, may be revoked by the City at any time, and the agreement also serves as a hold harmless to the City. Following these comments, the motion to approve the right-of-way use request was unanimously adopted.

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2643, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE GATLINBURG ZONING ORDINANCE, BEING ORDINANCE NO. 830, AND FURTHER BEING AN ORDINANCE TO RECLASSIFY PARCEL 76.02 TAX MAP 108 LOCATED AT 795 BUCKHORN ROAD IN THE CITY, FROM R-1 (LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL) DISTRICT TO C-5 (CRAFT COMMERCIAL) DISTRICT, First Reading (Passed Planning Commission 9/30/2025).

Item B under New Business was Ordinance Number 2643, an Ordinance to amend the Gatlinburg Zoning Ordinance, being Ordinance No. 830, and further being an Ordinance to reclassify Parcel 76.02 Tax Map 108 located at 795 Buckhorn Road in the City, From R-1 (Low Density Residential) District to C-5 (Craft Commercial) District, First Reading (Passed Planning Commission 9/30/2025). Commissioner Reagan made a motion to adopt the Ordinance on first reading which was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith. The Planning Director explained this is regarding a proposed rezoning at 795 Buckhorn Road and that the proposed rezoning was reviewed and approved by the Gatlinburg Municipal Planning Commission at its September 30, 2025, meeting and is presented this evening on first reading. Mayor Werner asked if there was any opposition to this proposed rezoning and the Planning Director said that there was not. Following these comments, the motion to adopt the Ordinance on first reading was unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A MEDICAL INSURANCE PLAN WITH BLUECROSS/BLUESHIELD FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2026, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026.

Item C under New Business was discussion and consideration of approving a Medical Insurance Plan with Bluecross/Blueshield for the period of January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026. Commissioner Reagan made a motion to approve the Medical Insurance Plan which was seconded by Commissioner Brackins. The Finance Director explained that this is regarding the renewal of the City's Medical Insurance beginning January 1, 2026 and running through December 31, 2026 and that the City is continuing to use the Health Reimbursement Account concept that has been used since 2024 and the recommendation is to choose the BlueCross BlueShield Plan that has Network S and that this plan will cause virtually no disruption to the City's employees. The Finance Director further explained that the City has ample amounts budgeted to cover these increases but will review as the FY 2026-2027 Budget is prepared to see if any adjustments need to be made. The City Manager stated he wanted to commend the Finance Director, Human

Resources Director, and Financial Analyst on working to navigate this renewal. Following these comments, the motion to approve the Medical Insurance Plan was unanimously adopted.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A DENTAL INSURANCE PLAN WITH BLUECROSS/BLUESHIELD FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2026, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026.

Item D under New Business was discussion and consideration of approving a Dental Insurance plan with Bluecross/Blueshield for the period of January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026. Commissioner Reagan made a motion to approve the Dental Insurance Plan which was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith. The Finance Director explained that this item is regarding the renewal of the City's Dental Insurance Plan for the 2026 Calendar Year and that the cost for renewal of the plan is $163,091, which is a $12,311 increase from the plan that covered the 2025 calendar year. Following these comments, the motion to approve the Dental Insurance Plan was unanimously adopted.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A LIFE AND DISABILITY PLAN WITH USAble FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2026, TO DECEMBER 31, 2026.

Item E under New Business was discussion and consideration of approving a Life and Disability Plan with USAble for the period of January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026. Commissioner Brackins made a motion to approve the Life and Disability Plan which was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith. The Finance Director explained that this item is regarding the renewal of the City's Basic Life and AD&D Insurance and Long-Term Disability Insurance for the 2026 Calendar Year. The total annual cost to the City for Life and AD&D Insurances is estimated to be approximately $65,430, which is an increase of $6,063 from the 2025 Calendar Year. Following these comments, the motion to approve the Life and Disability Plan was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION NUMBER 1031, A RESOLUTION REVISING THE CITY'S ASSET CAPITALIZATION THRESHOLD FROM $5,000 TO $10,000.

Item F under New Business was Resolution 1031, a Resolution revising the City's asset capitalization threshold from $5,000 to $10,000. Commissioner Reagan made a motion to adopt the Resolution which was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith. The Finance Director explained that this is regarding an increase of the City's present threshold for capitalizing asset purchases and that the current threshold of $5,000 has been in place for over 15 years and it is recommended that the amount be increased to $10,000 to account for the increase in pricing over the last several years. The Finance Director further explained that the City's Auditors, Crosslin PLLC, has surveyed some of its government clients and raising the threshold to $10,000 puts the City in line with other governments and that this was also verified with MTAS that this was a reasonable increase. Following these comments, the motion to adopt the Resolution was unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A GRANT CONTRACT FOR THE FY 2025-26 UROP STATE OPERATING ASSISTANCE WITH THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE MASS TRANSIT DEPARTMENT.

Item G under New Business was discussion and consideration of approving a Grant Contract for the FY 2025-26 UROP State Operating Assistance with the Tennessee Department of Transportation for the Mass Transit Department. Commissioner Reagan made a motion to approve the Grant Contract which was seconded by Commissioner Brackins. The Finance Director explained that this Grant Contract is regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 Urban Operating Assistance (UROP) Grant Contract from the Tennessee Department of Transportation and that the Grant is in the amount of $420,900 and will cover a portion of the operating expenses for the Mass Transit Department through June 30, 2026. The Finance Director further explained that this grant does have a local match of $105,225, bringing the total amount to $526,125. Following these comments, the motion to approve the Grant Contract was unanimously adopted.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING AN AGREEMENT WITH FLOCK GROUP, INC. FOR AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READERS.

Item H under New Business was discussion and consideration of approving an Agreement with Flock Group, Inc. for the automated license plate readers. Commissioner Brackins made a motion to approve the Agreement which was seconded by Commissioner Reagan. The Police Chief explained that this is a contract for the Flock License Plate Recognition System and that the City's contract is currently for six cameras within the City and this Contract is for the remaining six cameras that were a part of the original installation. The Police Chief explained that the total price of the contract, which is a 5-year term, is $84,499.98 and that the Flock Camera System is used daily by the Police Department to locate vehicles entering or existing the City which are being sought by other agencies for various reasons. Following these comments, the motion to approve the Agreement was unanimously adopted.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A LESSOR ESTOPPEL CERTIFICATE FOR OBER LAND, LLC.

Item I under New Business was discussion and consideration of approving a Lessor Estoppel Certificate for Ober Land, LLC. Commissioner Brackins made a motion to approve the Estoppel Certificate which was seconded by Commissioner Reagan. The City Attorney explained that this is a request from Ober Land, LLC and Ober Adventure, LLC to approve the Estoppel Certificate confirming that the Lease Agreement does not require Ober Adventure, LLC to obtain consent from the City to assign the Lease Agreement, including the Purchase Option, to Ober Land, LLC and to further consent to such assignment. The City Attorney also explained that the City executed a similar estoppel certificate in 2022. Following these comments, the motion to approve the Estoppel Certificate was unanimously adopted.

UNSCHEDULED :

Commissioner Randy Brackins

(1) Stated that he wanted to thank the City Manager and all of those who have worked to keep the Great Smoky Mountains National Park open during the Federal Government shutdown.

Commissioner Chad Reagan

(1) Stated that he too wanted to thank City staff and the Sevier County and other City governments for coming together to keep the National Park open; and,

(2) Stated that he wanted to thank the City Staff for their work to quickly have Cherokee Orchard Road reopened after the recent emergency slope repair.

There being no further business to come before the City Commission, Commissioner Brackins made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Reagan seconded the motion which was unanimously adopted.

Mike Werner, Mayor

Greg Patterson, City Recorder
/sb