

**TOWN OF BIG STONE GAP, VIRGINIA
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS
505 E 5TH STREET S
BIG STONE GAP, VA**

January 4, 2022

6:30 PM

AGENDA ITEM 1

Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order.

Those Present: Hon. Gary Johnson, Mayor
 Hon. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor
 Hon. Robert Bloomer, Councilman
 Hon. Kent Gilley, Councilman
 Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
 Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

Staff Present: Mr. Stephen Lawson, Town Manager
 Ms. Amanda Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
 Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

Those Absent: Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman
 Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

AGENDA ITEM 2

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of December 7, 2021, and the Regular Council Meeting of December 14, 2021, and the Organizational Meeting of December 16, 2021.

AGENDA ITEM 3

DAVID GIBSON – Planning Commission Chairman

Mr. Gibson was unable to attend due to a family crisis.

AGENDA ITEM 4

TOWN ENGINEER’S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

Mr. Broskey said he and Stephen Lawson had a conference call with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). They asked us to update the cost estimate of the bridge, which we are working on.

System Wide Water Loss Project

Mr. Broskey said Town Attorney Charles Bledsoe is working on easements for the System Wide Water Loss Project. He said we hope to get those out shortly.

Big Cherry Trails

Mr. Broskey said we advertised on December 18th for the environmental assessment on the Big Cherry Trails Project. There is a 30-day waiting period but he hopes to move forward with the project later this month.

Mr. Broskey said that was the end of his report but he would be glad to answer any questions.

Mr. Lawson asked Jon about his meeting with the Estes Brothers. Mr. Broskey said the meeting went well and Estes Brothers is eager to get started on moving and placing the rocks from the construction of the Shawnee Avenue Bridge to the fishing pier. He said they started on it and realized they needed a bigger excavator than they had with them but they will resume working on it very soon.

Councilman Gilley asked what will happen if the cost estimate of the Greenbelt Phase V bridge is more than the original estimate. Mr. Broskey said VDOT did not give us a definite answer to that question as there is no extra money in their budget to help if the updated estimates are higher than the original. Mr. Lawson said Lane Engineering has saved us some money on other projects that normally would not qualify for transfer to this VDOT project, but VDOT may allow us to do that for this project because of extenuating circumstances of higher than usual costs.

AGENDA ITEM 5**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT****a. Projects Update****Utility Bills**

Mr. Lawson said we will stop mailing second notices to utility customers at the end of February 2022 and will use an automated calling service to notify customers of any past due amounts. We will have the option to choose the message that goes out each month. Ms. Hawkins said we will receive a report each month of how many calls were made, how many were unanswered and messages were left, and how many calls failed to reach someone. The system will make three attempts to call the customer. Mr. Lawson said everything we are doing with this system is new in the area so any problems that arise are being worked out as they happen, so while we've had a few glitches, overall everything is working really well.

Mayor Johnson asked if there is a night drop at the new Municipal Complex. Mr. Lawson said there is one inside the lobby that is available all night. He said we may look into an outside drop box in the future. Ms. Hawkins said the drop box at Town Hall is still being used for Meals Taxes and Business Licenses so it will remain where it is.

Council Events

Mr. Lawson said Annual Disclosure forms will be e-mailed this week for Council's review. If no changes are needed a signature page will be available at the next Council meeting.

He said a Budget/Finance/Audit Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 11th, at 5 pm.

He said that on Thursday Heritage Hall will hold an Open House to dedicate a new expansion of their memory care unit. The unit will be named Chandler Hall in honor of all first responders and their families in the area. Masks will be required to attend the event, and he encouraged everyone who can attend to be there.

Town Events

Mr. Lawson said the Polar Plunge will be held on Saturday. This year it is a 5K run with no obstacles. They will have a live sign-up. The ice water will be in a dumpster with jump mats used for exiting.

A Chilly Chili Cook-off will be held that day also. So far we have nine entries (two people are making two recipes). First Prize will be \$150, Second Prize \$100, and the Third Prize will be \$50, with the People's Choice Prize \$25. The chili will be prepared beforehand and brought in crockpots for this year's event. The cook-off will begin at noon.

Building Business in BSG Challenge

Mr. Lawson said this Business Challenge is open to anyone who is expanding their business or opening a new business. So far we have 12 applicants who have contacted us to express interest, with six applications completed at this time. The deadline for submission is Saturday. Two of the new businesses will be in Lee County so they will not be eligible for any prize but they may still participate in the classes. The total payout will be \$57,000 – two First Place winners will receive \$15,000 each, the Second Place winner will get \$10,000, three Third Place winners will receive \$5,000 each, the Best Pitch winner will get \$1,000, and the Best Business Plan winner will be awarded \$1,000. He said classes will be approximately two hours long. The agenda is as follows:

- January 10th - Welcome to Business Planning
- January 17th - Managing Business 101
- January 24th - Knowing Your Local Business Professionals and Their Services
- January 31st – Business Financials and Money Management
- February 7th – Advertising, Social Media, and Marketing
- February 21st - Pitch Night and Business Plans Review

All information will be on bigstonegap.com and all Council members are welcome to attend and participate.

Police Department

Mr. Lawson said we have hired three new police officers and all three have completed their physicals and drug tests. The pre-entry for new Academy attendants is 10 am on Thursday. He said that after the Academy begins we will hire two more officers to train with our officers prior to attending the next Academy in the spring.

He said the Mayor has arranged for Wise County Administrator Michael Hatfield and Wise County Sheriff Grant Kilgore to be here next week to discuss assistance to the Town should the need arise.

Public Works

Mr. Lawson said we had a 12" main line leak in Crackers Neck a couple of weeks ago. He noted we are required to advertise a boil notice anytime we have a main line break. He said we complied with the notice by advertising on television all our social media sites as well as going door-to-door with a handout for the residents. He said we dropped the ball when the boil notice was rescinded because, even though we advertised on TV and the social media sites, we did not go door-to-door with the announcement that the boil water order was lifted. After meeting with Water Superintendent Gary Hampton, he said we've decided to use one of our phone lines as a dedicated line with an automated message so residents can call for updates to any notices advertised in the future.

Snow

Mr. Lawson said we didn't pre-treat roads because it rained before it snowed but we haven't received any complaints from residents about the roads. He said we have two employees scheduled to come out to start working the roads when it snows, with two employees set up to relieve them at the end of shift.

Local Government Day

Mr. Lawson said Local Government Day will be in Richmond on February 3rd from noon to 7 pm. He said if anyone wants to attend let him or Amanda know. He said he will not be attending because you only get a few minutes of face time with officials and it's not enough time to get anything done.

Italy Bottom

Mr. Lawson said he will meet on Thursday with Sandra Jones about a Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Planning Grant that we have applied for to make some improvements around Town. He said he will be asking her to be the champion for the Italy Bottom section, River Street in particular, to improve on utilities, sidewalks, and blight. He mentioned the Greenbelt will eventually go by that area. He said after this project gets under way he wants to focus on the Cadet area around the Robinette Steel compound.

AGENDA ITEM 6**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

AGENDA ITEM 7**COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Councilman Hughes thanked employees and said he is encouraged to hear about the new hires with the Police Department. He thanked everyone who reached out to him during the loss of his grandmother.

Vice-Mayor Bailey said she is also excited about the new hires and extended her thanks to our employees.

Mayor Johnson said he was invited to a meeting in Wise with Michael Hatfield and Grant Kilgore who expressed interest in coming to Council to discuss anything we may need. He extended condolences to Crystal for the loss of her grandfather. He thanked all of our employees

for their hard work as well as Mr. Lawson and Ms. Hawkins. He said he looks forward to continue seeing the Town grow.

**AGENDA ITEM 8
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:05 pm.

Minutes Recorded & Transcribed by
Amanda L. Hawkins – Town Clerk/Treasurer