

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

**ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE
VIA GO TO MEETING PLATFORM
BIG STONE GAP, VA**

January 5, 2021

6:30 PM

***As a result of the State of Emergency declared by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam on March 12, 2020 by Executive Order No. 51, by Wise County Virginia Executive Michael Hatfield on March 19, 2020 and by the Council of the Town of Big Stone Gap Virginia effective March 20, 2020, due to the public health emergency resulting from the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the public meeting scheduled for January 5, 2021 at 6:30 pm, is to be conducted electronically as authorized by Resolution 16-2020 adopted on September 8, 2020.**

***This Electronic Meeting was conducted via the GO TO MEETING platform and was made available to Council Members, Town Staff, and the public by conference call**

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. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney
 Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

Those Absent: Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman

AGENDA ITEM 2

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft minutes of the Council Workshop (Electronic Attendance) on December 1, 2020, the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic Attendance) of December 8, 2020, and the Special Council Meeting (in person) of December 15, 2020.

No comments.

AGENDA ITEM 3
TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT
Greenbelt Phase V

Jon Broskey said we are still waiting on permits. With the holidays the response is slow but we hope to have a response next week.

DEQ Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Program

Smoke testing is complete and the information is being evaluated. We are using four flow monitors moved throughout the system to gather information at twelve to sixteen different locations. We will continue to evaluate the manholes and provide videos and photographs during this process

System Wide Water Loss Project

Preliminary plans are almost complete. We are working on permits from JPA and the Railroad that should be submitted next month.

Mr. Lawson asked if Gary Hampton spoke with him today about manholes. Jon Broskey said they met in the field to review the data. It was decided that the flow monitor needed to be moved upstream to better evaluate the situation. We will return to Wood Avenue to inspect manholes and help trace the issue.

AGENDA ITEM 4
TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Resolution 01-2021 – Authorizing the Removal of Penalties

Mr. Lawson said this will be our first resolution of 2021. This resolution authorizes the removal of penalties for the utility customers who qualify for the Municipal Utility Relief Program funded by CARES Act moneys. Customers must apply for the utility assistance and certify that they have suffered economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have received several calls where customers ask us to pay their water bill. That is not possible. The customer must complete the application and certify the economic hardship suffered. The applications are still being accepted. Customers may call the Water Department to set up a time to complete the applications.

b. COVID-19 & Projects Update
Covid-19 Update

Mr. Lawson said Wise County has 2,182 cases, 116 hospitalizations and 60 deaths. Norton has 180 cases, 10 hospitalizations and 1 death. Lee County has 1,594 cases, 69 hospitalizations and 31 deaths. Scott County has 1,266 cases, 86 hospitalizations and 37 deaths. In speaking with the other Town Managers, the County Administrator, and our Ballard Health people, we expect the spike to continue to grow larger than it is now following the holidays. We need to continue to encourage the community to wear masks and be as safe as they can. Everyone in this group has had someone who has been affected. We have had deaths in our own Town Family due to this virus.

New Public Works Director

Mr. Lawson said Steve Clark is now the Public Works Director. His first big night out was the big leak in the 700 block of Wood Ave. It took 54 hours to locate and fix the leak. Mr. Lawson said Steve and his crew did an excellent job. They worked all thru the night every night in shifts making sure someone was there the whole time. Due to the extended period the water was off as a result of the break bottled water was distributed. A boil water advisory was issued for the 700 block of Wood Ave until test results could be provided to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). Council probably received several calls about this situation. This part of the water system is being evaluated as Jon Broskey mentioned and will soon be replaced. Kudos to Steve Clark and his team for finding the leak since all the water was leaking into a culvert under the road with no water coming up anywhere. Everything is fixed now, but we are still losing water in another section of Town that we are working to locate.

Greenbelt in Lights (GBIL)

Mr. Lawson said at last count Gary Harris had 815 people who had made reservations to ride on the GBIL. Harris reported 700 on his December report, but additional rides were scheduled and took place after the first of the year. There were far more people than that who enjoyed the GBIL display. Especially for this year, with all the depression and stress people have had to deal with during this pandemic. This gave people a chance to get out and walk around the Greenbelt with their families. Mr. Lawson commended everyone that helped with the event and Council for all they did. Special kudos to David Bailey and Mayor Gary Johnson for riding people around. We really appreciate the extra time that they put in there.

Meeting with Auditors

Mr. Lawson said he, Amanda and Renee met with the Auditors today. The Budget/Finance/Audit Committee will meet with the Auditors tomorrow at 4:00 pm for a presentation on the Audit.

Town Events

Gary Johnson commended Mr. Lawson on a job well done in reference to the major leak he assisted in finding and repairing. Johnson said he understood Mr. Lawson crawled into the culvert and did a lot of work himself. Johnson observed firsthand the hard work exhibited by Mr. Lawson, Steve Clark and the entire Public Works Crew.

Bobby Bloomer asked what section of Town was still losing water now. Mr. Lawson responded that we are losing water in the Southern - it might be in a manhole, getting into the sewer system somehow, so that is what we are looking into now. He said the Public Works team really came together under duress, and Steve did a really good job leading them. In the middle of the night one night, we had to make a call to Fred Luntsford to get another dump truck to be able to keep things moving and out of our way. It's really nice to be in a place where we can call another town and get help to get things done. It was all hands-on deck, and they did a good job.

AGENDA ITEM 5**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports

AGENDA ITEM 6**COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone for all of the prayers for the loss his family had. Because of Covid-19, no arrangements are being made for Ms. Hyson.

Bobby Bloomer said his mom, Carolyn, wished to be cremated and there would be no services right now because of Covid-19. The family will have something later in the summer. Bloomer thanked everyone who reached out to him.

Nancy Bailey said she had joined the meeting from Holston Valley Hospital where she was scheduled to have surgery the next day. She thanked everyone for sending messages and asked to be kept in our prayers.

Tyler Hughes offered his condolences to Bobby and his family as well as to Gary and his family. He said our thoughts and prayers will be with Nancy.

Kent Gilley told everyone to stay safe. He hoped things went well with Nancy's surgery.

Aaron McKinney offered condolences to Gary and Bobby for their losses. He said hopefully this year would be a little better for us.

AGENDA ITEM 7**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 6:48 pm.

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