

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

**ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE
Via GO TO MEETING Platform
BIG STONE GAP, VA**

January 12, 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 12, 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. All votes called for were roll call votes.**

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. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman
 Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman
 *Mrs. Bailey joined the meeting at 6:35 pm

Staff Present: Mr. Stephen Lawson, Town Manager
 Ms. Amanda L. Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
 Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

Those Absent: Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Mayor Gary Johnson.

AGENDA ITEM 3

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Gilley, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of January 12, 2021 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

**Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney
Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey**

**AGENDA ITEM 4
COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

No Comments

**AGENDA ITEM 5
GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop (Electronic) of December 1, 2020.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting (Electronic) of December 8, 2020.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- c. **Approval of minutes of the Special Council Meeting (In-person) of December 15, 2020. Recommended Action: Approve as presented**
- d. **Departmental Reports for the month of December 2020.
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**
- e. **Treasurer's Reports for the month of November 2020.
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that the General Order of Business be approved as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

**Ayes: Bailey, Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney
Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

**AGENDA ITEM 6
AUDIT REPORT – FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020
Tamara Greear, CPA from Rodefer Moss & Co presented the Financial Report**

Tamara Greear highlighted that this is a clean opinion with no significant or material deficiencies, and also that, due to expending more than \$750,000 in federal funding, the Town was subject to a single audit, and that, too, was a clean opinion.

Ms. Greear discussed Exhibit 1, Exhibit 2, Exhibit 3, and Exhibit 5 regarding the General Fund assets, liabilities, and fund balance as well as revenues and expenses. Further discussion covered Exhibit 7 and Exhibit 8 regarding the Water and Sewer Fund assets, liabilities, and fund balance as well as revenues and expenses. Ms. Greear pointed out that the Town was making strides in the right direction but the need to continue the annual review of water and sewer rates as well as other fees charged by the Town must continue in order to maintain these gains and to work to make more gains in the future. She recommended Council review the statistical data found in the tables beginning on page 72 of the report. Specifically, she discussed the legal debt margin in Table 11 which is in good standing and has seen a big improvement over the last ten years.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT
Greenbelt Phase V**

Jon Broskey said we received a response from the Army Corps of Engineers on our permit application asking for additional documentation on the Wetlands Determination for the

area of bridge abutments. Jon said they would have that completed and returned to them as soon as possible.

AGENDA ITEM 8

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

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

Mr. Lawson asked for the Council's approval authorizing the removal of penalties on customers' utility accounts who apply and qualify for the Municipal Utility Relief assistance as recommended by the Virginia Department of Housing Community Development.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve Resolution 01-2021 being a resolution authorizing the removal of penalties on utility customer accounts who apply and qualify for the Municipal Utility Relief Program Assistance as recommended by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development guidance. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bailey, Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

b. COVID-19 & Projects Update

Covid-19

Mr. Lawson said during the county-wide report on Monday, an announcement was given by the Governor that the State of Virginia now has someone dying every hour from COVID-19 complications. He said if that doesn't get people's attention, he's not sure what will. The COVID-19 vaccines are being given now to the Town EMS, Fire, Police, and EOC employees who choose to take the vaccine. Some of those individuals have now had their first dose. The protocols after receiving the first dose include recipients being contacted by email daily for a period of time to monitor for any reactions or issues. The remaining Town employees who are essential to the continuity of Government will be included in the Phase 1B Group #9. Those employees will be scheduled as soon as the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) opens the Group #9 vaccine window. Currently we have about half of our employees that have chosen to take the vaccine. Mr. Lawson said the Town will not require an employee to have the vaccine, it will be their choice. Mr. Bloomer asked what percentage of EMS took the vaccine. Lawson said about 100 percent of EMS and 70 percent of Fire personnel were vaccinated, but we had some volunteer firemen who chose not to take the vaccine.

COVID-19 Municipal Utility Relief Program

Mr. Lawson said coverage was extended from March 1, 2020 thru December 31, 2021. Our original award letter received on December 7, 2020 was for approximately \$50,000 to use for applicants to cover their utility bills if they had been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Lawson said we have received between \$25,000-\$30,000 in applications qualifying for assistance to date. The resolution passed tonight now allows Town staff to review those applications before being sent to the county for approval. He said they posted the notice and application on the Town Facebook account as well as the Town website. Town staff has contacted delinquent customers by phone and hand delivery of the applications. He told Council if they know anyone who thinks they may qualify, please have them fill out an application and send it in.

Annual Disclosures

Mr. Lawson said all Council Members should have received an individual email from Amanda this week with disclosures attached that must be completed annually. He said if they have had changes in their disclosures to please get in contact with Amanda or himself to update that information. Mr. Lawson reminded everyone the disclosures must be signed and returned to Amanda by the end of the month.

Mutual Building Apartments

Mr. Lawson attended a progress meeting today with the Big Stone Gap Housing Authority and the contractor for the five upstairs apartments at the Mutual Complex. The project is about two weeks behind at this point. The anticipated project finish date is mid-March.

Mutual Building Co-Workspace

Mr. Lawson said the HVAC was completed last Thursday for the Co-Workspace Project in the basement of the Mutual Complex. The heat was turned on to allow some final work to be completed on the bathrooms and the floor. Lawson said we expect this project to be completed within the next two weeks, if nothing goes wrong. Following completion we will set a date for an open house.

Audit

Mr. Lawson thanked Tamara Greear and her team for doing, as always, an excellent audit with us, giving excellent info and taking extra time to tell us things we can improve on. At this time of year, we always applaud Amanda and her team because when you have your auditors telling you that you are one of the best, it really means a lot. Mr. Lawson said he was lucky to have that team working for him, so thank you Amanda, Renee and your whole team.

Letter From Citizen

Mr. Lawson read a letter to Council that was received yesterday from Phyllis and Melvin Quillin via mail. The Quillins said they were extremely blessed by the theme at Miner's Park this year for the Christmas decorations. They loved the detailed decorations of the lamp posts through Town. They said while taking their nightly walks to look at the lights along the Greenbelt it was so peaceful and reminiscent of a Winter Wonderland. They wanted to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication especially with the difficult and challenging year everyone has had. Mr. Lawson stated that many calls were also received with this kind of message. He said that just hearing those comments and making people smile is everything.

AGENDA ITEM 9**COMMITTEE REPORTS****a. Budget/Finance/Audit Committee**

Mr. Bloomer said the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee met on January 6th to hear the audit report from Tamara Greear of Rodefer Moss. The committee agreed to recommend accepting the audit report.

The recommendation of the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee constitutes a motion and a second. The Committee recommends that Council accept the Audit Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020 as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bailey, Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney
Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 10 COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Nancy Bailey said she appreciated all the prayers and thoughts and she was released from the hospital yesterday. Nancy thanked Amanda and Steve and the team on the Audit. She also thanked the Public Works Department for taking care of the stump in her yard. Mr. Lawson said that it was actually Parks and Recreation that took care of that stump. Nancy thanked the Parks and Rec Crew as well.

Bobby Bloomer thanked Parks and Recreation on the great job on the Greenbelt in Lights this year and hoped it would grow next year.

Kent Gilley thanked all the employees for doing a wonderful job. Kent said he was glad Nancy was doing well. He told everyone to stay safe and well.

Tyler Hughes thanked the Town employees and Amanda and all her staff as well. He said he received several messages speaking very highly of the decorations on the Greenbelt and interest in decorations or lights at different times of the year, specifically mentioning 4th of July. Hughes said citizens had asked about the Greenbelt crosswalks again asking if we have the ability to put up signage warning traffic about pedestrians in those crosswalks.

Bobby Bloomer said he had also heard people talking about doing decorations on the Greenbelt at different times of the year such as the 4th of July and Memorial Day.

Mr. Lawson said if these people would like to come forward and talk about it, the Town would be willing to listen and help if the funds are available in the budget. Our whole intent is to get the community involved.

Crystal Lyke recommended getting the community more involved with the tree lighting at Miners Park next year by asking the community to bring an ornament of whatever they want and hang it on the tree. With the way 2020 went, maybe it would lift peoples' spirits, and possibly get more citizens of the Town to show up for the Lighting of the Tree.

Aaron McKinney said for everyone to be safe and try to stay healthy.

Mayor Johnson said the Greenbelt was definitely a hit. Mr. Johnson said he enjoyed seeing more merchants from other towns support us with displays - it brings the communities together. He said we've had nothing but wonderful comments. Parks and Recreation and Public Works all did a great job. All of our Police, Fire Department, and upper management repeatedly show the results of teamwork. Mr. Johnson stated that when you get an audit like we do every year he must commend Stephen, Amanda and their crew for a wonderful job. We don't know what lies ahead, just enjoy every moment.

Mr. Lawson mentioned that he received an email Monday from Jillian Bullock with news that in September, in Savannah, the Bullocks' Low and Slow Cooking Team won the State Steak Cook-off Championship for Georgia and was awarded the Golden Ticket to the Steak Cook-off World Championship in Ft. Worth, Texas. Jillian asked if the town would be willing to financially support this journey and she would promote Big Stone Gap while there. Mr. Lawson asked if any of the Council would be opposed to supporting them financially. Council agreed to support this venture.

AGENDA ITEM 11

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that the meeting be adjourned. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bailey, Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.

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