

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

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

**February 2, 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 February 2, 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. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman  
                                  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

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

**Review of draft minutes of the Council Workshop (Electronic Attendance) on January 5, 2021, and the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic Attendance) of January 12, 2021.**

No changes or discussion

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT**

**Greenbelt Phase V**

Jon Broskey said we have received a few responses from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). VMRC is asking for a \$300 fee we are working to get turned around and we hope to have that permit very soon. The Army Corps of Engineers permit information has been submitted and we hope to get that permit soon.

**Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Project**

Mr. Broskey said the work on the DEQ Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Project is continuing the flow monitoring, with focus being on East 9<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. He said we have a large amount of I&I in that area. There are three monitors in that area to see where the flow is coming from, and the next step will be putting dye in the lines. Flow monitors will then be moved to a different area. Broskey said once weather breaks, they will be doing smoke testing in the East 9<sup>th</sup> Street area.

**System Wide Water Loss Project**

Mr. Broskey said work is continuing on the permit applications for this project. Work is starting on the Valleyview and Danberry Heights Pump Station Project which is an improvement project designed to meet Virginia Department of Health standards.

**AGENDA ITEM 4****TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT****a. Budget Amendment – HIDTA Grant (January to June 2021)**

Mr. Lawson said this amendment is done annually and is to recognize the second half of the funding award due to HIDTA being on a calendar year cycle versus the Town's fiscal year cycle.

**b. Serv Line Water Loss Protection**

Mr. Lawson said we need to make a decision on the Water Loss Protection program. He said it does not necessarily mean we are going to shelf this; we just need to know what is going to be done during this budget year. Mr. Lawson said there hasn't been many comments from Council at this point, and Ms. Hawkins needs to be able to give Serv Line feedback as to which direction Council wants to go with this insurance policy program – either to move forward or postpone participation. She said she does have some concerns about implementing the program now due to the economic hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic still being dealt with by our customers. Mr. Lawson said we did need some feedback from Council. He said he feels this is not the right time and the program should be tabled for the moment, but Council's guidance is needed to make a final decision. Mayor Johnson stated he agreed with Mr. Lawson's position.

**c. COVID-19 & Projects Update**

Mr. Lawson said he hoped everyone planning to get the vaccine has either received it or has an appointment scheduled. He informed everyone that registration has changed from VAMS to the PrepMod system. Everyone should have received an email from the new PrepMod system. If anyone has not received an email from the new system please contact Ms. Hawkins. Several council members stated they had not received an email from PrepMod, even after registering initially on the VAMS system.

**Mutual Co-Workspace**

Mr. Lawson stated the first coat of floor covering in the Co-Workspace will be finished tomorrow. Half of the area was done today and a second coat will be done next week. He said the bathrooms were being redone due to an issue with the glue not adhering to the walls because of the excess moisture in the area. Mr. Lawson said they hope to be completely finished with the construction sometime next week so they can begin marketing it and have an open house, but he wants to have a run thru before we invite everyone down.

**Fire in Restrooms at Bullitt Park**

Lawson said there was a fire set in the trash cans in the restrooms under the home side football bleachers at Bullitt Park. The Parks and Recreation crew had cleaned the restrooms at 9 am that Saturday. Then sometime between 9 am and 11 am someone went in and set the two trashcans on fire. Lawson said there was a lot of smoke damage. Since the restrooms are made of stone and block there was a lot of clean up but limited damage. The trash cans were burnt to a crisp but everything has been cleaned up. For now, the restrooms will remain open during the day for Greenbelt users but will be locked in the evenings and at night unless a Parks and Recreation employee is in attendance for a special event.

**P-Nut Football**

Mr. Lawson said a meeting was held last Thursday to discuss a possible P-Nut football season. Due to not having enough players to form teams because children were already involved in basketball, travel ball, and Little League the P-Nut Football program has been cancelled. He said the program organizers thanked us for all of our support, but as of now, they have made the decision to just start back up in July.

**Little League**

Mr. Lawson said that he was supposed to have a Little League meeting today, but due to the weather it was cancelled. Lawson said they will meet at a later date and decide when the season is going to start.

**Multipurpose Building at Bullitt Park**

Mr. Lawson said we now have the building under cover and are awaiting funding to finish up the construction.

**Greenbelt**

Mr. Lawson said that all of the stumps along the Greenbelt have now been ground and removed. Lawson said that there were over 75 stumps removed throughout town and around the Greenbelt. Parks and Recreation has been working on the stumps for a couple weeks.

**Shawnee Bridge Replacement**

Mr. Lawson said the last set of plans from VDOT have been approved. They are now working on the next phase of the project, which is the bid process.

**AGENDA ITEM 5****COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a. **Planning Commission – Matthew Bright**

Matthew Bright stated that Old Dominion Power Company (ODP) is proposing to install a High-Voltage Line to connect two substations in Big Stone Gap. The Town's zoning regulations requires a Special Use Permit from the Planning Commission and subsequently Council's approval before ODP's request is granted. The line will cross the Powell River in Italy Bottom and run to 24<sup>th</sup> Street in the Southern Section.

Mr. Bright said there are several concerns to consider before submitting the request to Council for their approval:

- a. Ensuring the proposed Right-of-Way (ROW) does not interfere with the Town's plans for the Greenbelt in the East River Street area.
- b. Spraying of the ROW with chemicals to remove vegetation and establish a vegetation management program to encourage natural wood, grass and shrubs but no trees. Mr. Bright said the Special Use Permit could stipulate only safe chemicals or no chemicals be used. Mr. Bledsoe suggested that ODP provide a "hold harmless" clause.

Several Council members said they have received comments from citizens regarding the flags that ODP has been placing along the proposed route. Mr. Bright emphasized that a Special Use Permit requires that a Joint Public Hearing be held by the Planning Commission and Town Council to address citizen comments and concerns. He said that ODP is still in the process of getting a ROW and the Planning Commission and Council need to decide what stipulations they wish to put into the Special Use Permit before the process moves forward.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6**

### **COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Nancy Bailey said she is just glad to be in attendance.

Kent Gilley thanked all of the town employees and hoped everyone stayed safe.

Tyler Hughes thanked all of the town employees as well and encouraged everyone to stay safe.

Crystal Lyke thanked all the town employees.

Gary Johnson said that our employees are doing a good job with what we have to work with. Johnson said we need to make that clear when receiving complaints. Employees do a great job, and we need to give them a pat on the back, "Atta Boy"!

## **AGENDA ITEM 7**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned 7:21 pm.**

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