

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

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
505 E. 5<sup>TH</sup> STREET, SOUTH  
BIG STONE GAP, VA**

**April 9, 2019**

**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. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman \*  
                              Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

Staff Present:         Mr. Stephen Lawson, Town Manager  
                              Mrs. Judy C. Hall, Town Clerk/Treasurer  
                              Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

Staff Absent:         Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

\* Ms. Lyke arrived at 6:33 pm

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

**INVOCATION by Rev. Josh Tompkins of West End Baptist Church.**

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**AGENDA ITEM 4**

**ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA**

**Motion by Bailey, seconded by Hughes, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of April 9, 2019 be amended to add, under the Town Manager’s Report, a proclamation recognizing Kids Central moving to their new location. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**AGENDA ITEM 5**

**COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

**Tommy Coomer, 2905 Raleigh Road, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219**

Mr. Coomer said that last year he informed Council of a tree in the river behind the June Tolliver House that is hindering water flow. He was there recently trout fishing and noticed the tree was still there and beer cans are everywhere.

Mayor Johnson said that we have had high water, which creates a hazardous situation for Town crews to try to remove the tree. He said we will reconsider the situation.

**Edward R. Hutchinson, 243 Hamblen Street, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219**

Mr. Hutchinson said he came before Council some time back on behalf of the Friends of Mt. Hermon Presbyterian Church seeking assistance for needed renovation and restoration of their church building. He gave a written update to Council and introduced Rev. Barnette from Bluff City.

Rev. Barnette said Council was very gracious when the committee came before them previously. He said that when he came here ten years ago to pastor this church, this city was recovering from a disaster (referring to the tornado of 2008). He said the Holston Presbytery gave the church money for renovations, but the church gave all of that money to people in the community who were in need. He said he is aware that the request he is making is a bit out of the ordinary, and that Council doesn't usually respond to a request from a church because that would appear to be supporting religion. But, at the same time, he noted that the Town is able to give a tax break to new businesses to come in. In the same spirit, he asked Council for a donation. He commented that the church has historic stained glass windows that need to be preserved. He said he believes that a miracle is taking place in this church and hopes Council will share in that miracle.

**Cherie Israel, 1418 Shelby Avenue West, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219**

Ms. Israel said that on Shelby Avenue the speed limit is 25 mph. She said that kids play in the road with hover boards and bicycles with motors on them. She said that people 'fly' up and down the hill making it dangerous even to back their cars onto the road. She asked if something could be done.

**Jim Fawbush, 427 Avenue, Norton, VA 24279**

Mr. Fawbush said he spoke to Council last year about making the South Fork of the Powell River handicapped accessible. He said he had the privilege this afternoon of walking with the Town Manager and Gary Harris and was pleased to hear that they're planning at least one handicapped accessible dock to fish from in the near future. He noted that there are very few streams around that are accessible to wheelchairs. He also commented that the Department of Game & Inland Fisheries has stocked the river five times already this year. He said he appreciates what the Town is doing and believes this will be really good for tourism.

**AGENDA ITEM 6**

**GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop Meeting of March 5, 2019.**  
**Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting of March 12, 2019.**  
**Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of March, 2019.**  
**Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

- d. **Treasurer’s Report for the month of February, 2019.**  
**Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

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

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

**AGENDA ITEM 7**

**TOWN ENGINEER’S REPORT**

**Rt. 610 & Shelby Avenue Phase II Waterline Replacement Project**

Mr. McElroy said we received approval from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) yesterday. We have addressed all comments from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) for the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) and expect approval from them at any time. He said we hope to advertise for bids in May and to close the project by August.

**Fisher Road & Shelby Avenue Phase I Waterline Replacement Project**

Mr. McElroy said that all connections have been made on this project and that as soon as they get the ditches repaired and lay asphalt these two projects will be ready to close out.

**Cadet & West 8<sup>th</sup> Street Waterline Replacement Project**

Mr. McElroy said the contractor is putting the finishing touches on the telemetry so the Water Treatment Plant can monitor the pump from the plant.

**Big Cherry Access Road and Security Improvements Project**

Mr. McElroy said that all the work on the road has been completed and the road to Big Cherry opened on Friday. The only outstanding items are the security camera poles, which they are working on, and they hope to close this project within the next 45-60 days.

**System-wide Water Loss Study Project**

Mr. McElroy reminded Council that we submitted a funding application to VDH for Phase 1-B of this project, and said they continue to work with Rural Development to find ways to fund the remaining projects, particularly Phase 1-A.

**AGENDA ITEM 8**

**TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT**

- a. **Budget Amendment**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this amendment to the FY2018-19 Budget.

**Motion by Bailey, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve a Budget Amendment increasing Water Fund Revenues and Expenditures by \$721,233.00. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**b. Ordinance 05-2019 – Council Elections Moved to November**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this ordinance moving Council elections from May to November.

**Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve Ordinance 05-2019 being an ordinance moving Council elections from May to November. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**c. Resolution 06-2019 – Rural Development Funding – Water Project Phase 1A**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this resolution authorizing the Town Manager to submit a funding application to Rural Development for Waterline Project Phase 1-A.

**Motion by Bailey, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve Resolution 06-2019 authorizing the application for financial assistance from USDA-Rural Development for the Waterline Project Phase 1-A and also authorizing the Town Manager or Mayor to execute documents, including debt and security instruments, as may be required. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**d. Proclamation – Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Mrs. Bailey added that there will be a small ceremony at 3pm tomorrow at the Visitor Center. The proclamation will be read and a presentation made by Janie Dockery, the Children's Advocacy Center Director.

**Motion by Hughes, seconded by McKinney, that Council approve a Proclamation recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**e. Proclamation – Kids Central**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation recognizing Kids Central in their new location downtown.

**Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve a proclamation recognizing Kids Central Inc. having moved to their new location at 309 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street North. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**f. Appointment – Town Clerk/Treasurer**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve the appointment of Amanda L. Hawkins as the Town Clerk/Treasurer.

**Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, that Council appoint Amanda L. Hawkins as the Town Clerk/Treasurer for the Town of Big Stone Gap. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

Mayor Johnson administered the Oath of Office of Town Clerk/Treasurer to Amanda L. Hawkins. Ms. Hawkins assumed the duties of the Clerk of the Council.

**g. Resolution 07-2019 – Signatory Authority**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this resolution to authorize the Mayor, Town Manager, and Town Clerk/Treasurer to conduct banking transactions for the Town.

**Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve Resolution 07-2019 being a resolution authorizing the Mayor, Town Manager, and Town Clerk/Treasurer to conduct banking transactions for the Town. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

**h. Projects Update**

Mr. Lawson said the road to Big Cherry opened last Friday, at which time he met with DGIF about regulations in place concerning fishing, etc. The road will be left open at night thru September since DGIF has stocked the lake with catfish and catfish fishing is usually done at night. Rules are posted at the lake and are available at the Water Office at Town Hall.

He said that in addition to repairing the slides, the contractor deepened the ditches alongside the road and installed several new pipes as well. They expanded some parking areas and widened some places. They also fixed the road to Century Road, which residents have been asking for. They constructed a water bar on an area with a steep descent that was causing water to pool in the road.

Mr. Lawson discussed the security part of the project. He said we now have a chain link fence that closes off access to the dam and overflow area. The gate is open now but we have the ability to close it if we need to do so.

He said that he and Stephen McElroy agreed that the solar panels the contractor installed are too low and too easily accessible to anyone wanting to damage them. He said they want them to be at least nine feet in the air to make it more difficult to reach them.

Kids Fishing Day is scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup> this year. They felt it would encourage greater participation if it was not on the same day as the Gathering in the Gap or Memorial Day. The lake will be stocked on Wednesday, then the lake will be closed until Saturday so the kids will be the first to fish in the well –stocked lake. He said we might even take the time to make that week a retreat for employees and Council members if they are interested.

Mr. Lawson said that he met with Mr. Fawbush to look at possible locations for handicapped accessibility to the river to fish. We are talking to several agencies for possible funding and have already identified three possible locations to construct a concrete pad with a curb that will allow a wheelchair to get close to the waters' edge: a Walk Bridge behind Town Hall - \$5,000, Proctor Street Bridge - \$9,000, and Jessie Lea RV Park - \$4,000. Mr. Lawson said that we have chosen the RV Park location to build the first pad. Since we haven't found a funding source, the Town will pay for this pad from the General Fund.

**7:20 pm - Mayor Johnson stepped out from the meeting. Vice-Mayor Bailey assumed control of the meeting.**

Mr. Lawson said he, Steve Hamm, and Gary Harris met with a group of concerned citizens from Italy Bottom. They asked for a stronger police presence in the area and better animal control. There are some drainage problems with ditches along the power station to the river, and problems with vehicles speeding. He said that as we expand the Greenbelt into that area we will work hard to fix things in that part of Town.

Mr. Lawson skimmed thru various events coming up:

- The Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by the Parks & Recreation Dept. will begin Saturday at 10 am with their traditional walk from the Slemp Library to Bullitt Park.
- The ceremony for the Proclamation declaring April as Child Abuse Prevention Month at the Visitor Center begins at 3 pm tomorrow, April 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Union Middle School has a 5K race at 3pm on Saturday following the Easter Egg Hunt. The race will begin at the Visitor Center.
- Derby Days will be on May 4<sup>th</sup> at 9 am.
- The MEOC Walkathon will be on May 5<sup>th</sup>.
- DMME will meet Stephen at Big Cherry to check the stability of the mudslide one more time.
- The asphalt plant opens tomorrow, April 10<sup>th</sup>. We will be sending two trucks and will begin patching potholes.
- The Steak Cook-off will be on October 19<sup>th</sup> this year. The event will coincide with Home Craft Days to draw more people.

Mr. Lawson suggested we consider holding a catfish tournament at Big Cherry sometime this summer. Since catfish fishing takes place at night we would need a police officer there overnight.

Breakthru Construction has given us a quote to move a utility pole above the band section over the home bleachers to allow paving behind the stadium. The quote is for \$3,800 and will be paid for from the General Fund.

Three downtown business, two new ones and one existing one, had their final interviews last week for a \$10,000 Virginia Coalfield Educational Development Authority (VCEDA) Grant. The chances of them receiving the grant is looking good.

**AGENDA ITEM 9  
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**a. Planning Commission**

No report.

**AGENDA ITEM 10  
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. Hughes said he was glad to be back in Town. He said he would like to meet with Stephen to see if Lisa Davis is ready to start working on the Coca-Cola Mural. He said that on May 2<sup>nd</sup> he will be doing a presentation to the Arts Caucus in Congress on Capitol Hill about Arts in Southwest Virginia. He will be talking about our mural project.

Mr. McKinney said the Public Works crew and the Brush Crew did a good job for his Dad in topping trees and cleaning up.

Ms. Lyke said the Easter Egg Hunt is a great event for the kids. She also mentioned another great event taking place at UVA Wise at 11 am the same day. The Brain Health Run is a 1-Mile Walk or a 3-Mile/5K Run called a Color Run. They have a great motivational speaker lined up. All of the proceeds goes to UVA Wise students. There is a \$20 entry fee.

Mayor Johnson said they absolutely have a ball at the Kids Fishing Day. He said that Little League is kicking off their season and are looking for volunteers to work the concession stands.

Mrs. Bailey suggested that for those who cannot walk in the MEOC Walkathon to please consider making a donation. Last year MEOC served 914 families in Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties with a total of \$219,000. She said that all of their money comes from the Walkathon or private donations – they receive no grant money at all. She said that on Saturday night there will be a MECC Foundation dinner honoring Dr. Brownie Polly and Barbara Polly.

Mr. Lawson commended Judy Hall for her service to this Town. He said that words cannot express what she means to everyone, and he appreciates everything she has done.

Ms. Hall said that all of the Council Members in Big Stone Gap are family. She said this is the best Town in Southwest Virginia.

**AGENDA ITEM 11  
CLOSED SESSION – SECTION 2.2-3711(A)(2) of the Code of Virginia, for the discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.**

**Motion by Hughes, seconded by McKinney, that Council enter a Closed Session in accordance with Section 2.2-3711(A)(2) of the Code of Virginia, for the discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council re-convene into Open Session. Motion resulted as follows:**

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

**Ms. Hall read the Certification of Closed Meeting. Roll call vote resulted as follows:**

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

**Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

**AGENDA ITEM 12**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bailey, 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 7:33 pm.**

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Minutes Recorded & Transcribed by  
Judy C. Hall, CMC – Town Clerk/Treasurer  
Amanda L. Hawkins – Town Clerk/Treasurer