

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

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

**June 2, 2020**

**6:30 PM**

**\*As a result of the State of Emergency declared by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam on March 12, 2020, 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, the public meeting on June 2, 2020, at 6:30 pm, is to be conducted electronically as authorized by Resolution 08-2020 adopted on April 7, 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**

**PUBLIC HEARING – Ordinance 09-2020 being an ordinance appropriating funds for the fiscal year 07-01/2020 thru 06/30/2021.**

Mayor Johnson recessed the Council Workshop and opened the Public Hearing. He called for comments from citizens on the proposed ordinance for the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget. Hearing no comments, Mayor Johnson closed the Public Hearing.

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**PUBLIC HEARING – Ordinance 10-2020 being an ordinance implementing a Local Hospital Provider Assessment.**

Mayor Johnson opened the Public Hearing for the ordinance regarding a Local Hospital Provider Assessment. He called for comments from citizens. Hearing none, Mayor Johnson closed the Public Hearing and reconvened the Council Workshop.

**AGENDA ITEM 4****REVIEW OF MINUTES**

**Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop (Electronic Attendance) on May 5, 2020 and the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic Attendance) of May 12, 2020.**

No comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 5****TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT****Greenbelt Project Phase V**

Mr. McElroy said the geo-technical report is complete and has been forwarded to the structural engineers. They are now working on the 90% design plans and 100% drawings and expect to have them ready in about three weeks.

**Rt. 610 and Shelby Avenue Waterline Replacement Project**

Mr. McElroy said they have completed connecting the new lines on Rt. 610 and have finished that section except for the paving. They are moving to Shelby Avenue in Cadet. They expect to complete this project by the end of June or the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

**DEQ Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Program**

Mr. McElroy said that we may be eligible for \$100,000 from DEQ's I & I Studies Program to develop a detailed study of our sewer system. The funds would be a 75% grant and a 25% loan or matching funds from the Town. The Town plans to ask Lenowisco for the 25% match. Any portion of the 25% match Lenowisco does not cover the Town will pledge the Sewer Improvement Funds. The application deadline is July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Lawson said we need to conduct a study of our wastewater system to develop a plan of what needs to be done. He said he has a meeting on Wednesday with Lenowisco about another project and will use that opportunity to talk with them about assisting with this study.

Mr. McElroy said this would be a comprehensive study of the entire wastewater system. If awarded funding and a project is developed, it would open the door for up to 50% grant funding from DEQ for construction of any approved plans.

**AGENDA ITEM 6****TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT****a. Resolution 11-2020 – Amend PPTRA Rate**

Mr. Lawson said this resolution is to amend the Personal Property Tax Relief rate. Ms. Hawkins explained that this resolution will change the current discount rate from 60% to 55%. She said the State only reimburses the Town a certain amount each year and last year we discounted approximately \$3,500 more than we were reimbursed. She said to keep the discounted amount and the reimbursement amount as close as possible so we don't lose revenue we re-evaluate the PPTRA rate every couple of years and adjust accordingly.

**b. Budget Amendment – HIDTA Grant (01/01/2020 to 06/30/2020)**

Mr. Lawson said he will be asking Council's approval for this budget amendment that accounts for the first half of the HIDTA Grant awarded in January 2020.

**c. Projects Update**

Mr. Lawson said we met with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) about the Shawnee Avenue Bridge. He said the project will go to bid next March.

He said that he and Amanda Hawkins have a video conference call scheduled for tomorrow with Wise County officials to talk about drawing down funds for the CARES Act. The county receives the funds from the State and distributes those funds to the towns as they request it. The money will cover anything the Town has had to purchase because of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Funds must be expended by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Lawson said that Nancy forwarded a request from a citizen who asked that we pave the area around the flag pole at Oakview Cemetery. He noted that we don't have an endowment fund for Oakview Cemetery for maintenance but we will get an estimate for that area when we get our annual estimates for street paving. He said that if, after paving the streets, we have enough asphalt left we may be able to use it there.

He said that Melanie Bobrosky asked permission to hold a military service for her father at Bullitt Park on June 27<sup>th</sup>. She said her father helped build the swinging bridge across the Powell River at Bullitt Park and had fond memories of working on that project. Mr. Lawson said he doesn't have a problem with that event and asked Council for their opinion. Mayor Johnson said he thinks it's a good idea, noting that the gentleman was a veteran and deserving of being honored.

Mr. Lawson said that tomorrow we will salute the medical personnel at Ballard Health. Stephen McElroy will bring the Norton Fire Department truck and the big American flag will be on display. Billy Chandler will have our new fire truck there. We will use the bucket truck to hang a banner between the Norton fire truck and our bucket truck. Mr. Lawson said that Ballard Health offered to provide the banner but when he looked at it today it was the same one that was used at Norton and has some damage from strong winds. Mr. Lawson said he is very disappointed in Ballard's expectation that we would be satisfied with a poor quality banner.

He said that new pipe was delivered today for the culvert above the Jessie Lea RV Campground and should be installed by late this evening. He said the pipe will extend 15 feet onto the RV Campground property with the owner's permission. This is advantageous to both the property owner and the Town as it will prevent water from washing out the sewer pipe.

Mr. Lawson said that the System-Wide Water Loss Study & Improvements Project award to the Town was announced by Rural Development (RD). When the Bristol Herald Courier reported on it, the article stated that our fresh water distribution site was not in compliance with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Mr. Lawson explained that in order to receive the funding award from RD we had to say that IF these problems continue to exist, at some point in time we would be out of compliance with our distribution system. When the newspaper published their article they left out the "IF" and stated that we were out of compliance. He said we had the newspaper issue a correction, so the issue is resolved, but we did field a few inquiries about it.

Mr. Lawson said that demolition and drainage improvements in the co-work space in the Mutual Building began Monday. He said we anticipate putting up walls by the end of June.

He said the Big Stone Gap Café and General Store had a soft opening last week that went very well. Right now they are doing mercantile, craft beers and sodas, and live music at various times. Everyone is anticipating the coal-fired pizza oven being up and running. Mrs. Bailey said they expect to begin serving salads tomorrow and pizza very soon, adding that If Birds Could Fly and Brandon Maggard performed a great concert last Sunday.

Mr. Lawson said that we have lifted our hiring freeze and are looking for Parks & Recreation and Public Works employees to fill some slots that have opened.

He thanked Tyler Hughes for volunteering to clear weeds out of the butterfly on the Greenbelt. Mr. Hughes said he had a great time and a good sunburn.

Mr. Lawson said we are sending a letter of intent to apply for a DHCD program that will be offered thru CDBG. It's called a Small Business Recovery Assistance Grant and is designed to

help businesses of 20 or less employees through this tough economy caused by the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

He said the Farmers' Market opens this Thursday at the Visitor Center. Hand sanitizing stations will be set up for visitors.

Mr. Lawson said the video that Henry Keuling-Stout created is finished and will be distributed world-wide and in several languages. The film will be dedicated to everyone who has lost a loved one during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Lawson noted that all the filming was done at Big Cherry.

**d. COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Lawson said that the Governor's Phase II Plan will be effective this Friday. We will update our website with the new guidelines.

**AGENDA ITEM 7**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

**AGENDA ITEM 8**

**COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. Gilley said it's good news that Phase II will begin this week. He said it will help restaurants to have people inside again.

Mr. Bloomer said that his nephew is out of the hospital. He was there almost 50 days and lost 90 pounds, but is doing much better.

Mr. Hughes thanked all the Town crews for their hard work. He said he had fun pulling weeds today and encouraged anyone who wanted to volunteer to come help.

Ms. Lyke noted that her grandmother is now bedridden and not doing well. Ms. Lyke said she is her full-time caretaker.

Mr. McKinney encouraged everyone to stay safe and well.

Mrs. Bailey said she is excited about the Big Stone Gap General Store opening. She asked everyone to keep the employees of the Lee County federal prison in their prayers – they have been put on alert to go to Washington DC to assist with riot control.

Mayor Johnson said we are experiencing devastation across our nation, and should be grateful to live where we do. He said there are a few protests being planned in our area and he hopes they will be peaceful. He thanked our police officers and first responders for what they do, as well as the fire department and public works employees. He noted in particular an instance in which our public works employees delivered wood to a resident's home for firewood rather than take it to the landfill. He encouraged everyone to be safe and take care.

**AGENDA ITEM 9**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned 7:10 pm.**

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