

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

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

June 8, 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 June 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm, is to be conducted electronically as authorized by Resolution 02-2021 adopted on April 13th, 2021.**

***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. 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 L. Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney
Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

Those Absent: Hon. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Mayor Gary Johnson.

AGENDA ITEM 3

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of June 8, 2021 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

ROLL CALL VOTE:

**Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney
Nayes: 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 the Council Workshop (Electronic) of May 4, 2021.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- b. **Approval of minutes of the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic) of May 11, 2021.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- c. **Approval of minutes of the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting (Electronic) of May 21, 2021
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- d. **Approval of minutes of the Special Council Meeting (Electronic) of May 21, 2021.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- e. **Departmental Reports for the month of May 2021.
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**
- f. **Treasurer's Reports for the month of April 2021.
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

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

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

**AGENDA ITEM 6
TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT**

Mr. Broskey said he has nothing to add to his report last week at the Council Workshop but would be happy to answer questions.

Mr. Lawson expressed his appreciation to The Lane Group on the occasion of their 25th Anniversary celebration. He said they have worked hard over the years to give the Town great projects and for being willing to help with every step along the way.

Mr. Broskey said it has been a pleasure to work with the Town and appreciates everything we have done to work with them over the years.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **Ordinance 07-2021 – FY2021-22 Budget**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this ordinance to adopt the new Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve Ordinance 07-2021 being an ordinance adopting the budget for the Town of Big Stone Gap, VA for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, appropriating funds for the fiscal year and placing levies upon

all real estate, personal property, bank stock, licenses, fees, consumer utility services, meals tax, vehicle license tax, cigarette tax, transient occupancy tax, and all other levies as previously imposed or modified herein. Motion resulted as follows:

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

b. Resolution 08-2021 – Lenowisco Hazard Mitigation Plan

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this resolution supporting the Lenowisco Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is an area-wide flood mitigation plan.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve Resolution 08-2021 being a resolution adopting the 2021 update to the Lenowisco Hazard Mitigation Plan to meet local requirements under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. Motion resulted as follows:

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

c. Pro Art Association Visual Art Project

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve the installation of an art project called “Earth Splash” on the Greenbelt Trail as part of Pro Art’s Visual Art Project.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that Council authorize the Pro Art Association to commission visual artist Heather Harvey to create a temporary art work on the Greenbelt Walking Trail entitled “Greenbelt Earth Splash!” Motion resulted as follows:

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

d. Proclamation – Welcoming Mr. Automotive

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation welcoming the new business Mr. Automotive, LLC to Town. The company is owned by Mark Hall and is located at 424 East 5th Street North.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a proclamation welcoming Mr. Automotive, LLC owned by Mark Hall located at 424 E 5th Street N. Motion resulted as follows:

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

e. Proclamation – National Garden Club Week

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation recognizing June 6-12 as National Garden Club Week. He mentioned that the local Garden Club presented flowers and a copy of

their certificate to the Visitor Center on Monday. Today they spruced up the book exchange box behind Bullitt Park, and tomorrow they plan to pull weeds, mulch, and plant flowers at the 101 Car at the Museum. Thursday they plan to place a wreath at the Blue Star Memorial at 6 pm.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve a resolution designating June 6-12 as National Garden Club Week. Motion resulted as follows:

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

f. Parade Permit – July 4th

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this permit for the annual Fourth of July Parade to be held on July 4th at 4:00 pm. Mr. Lawson proposed that we allow the Union High School (UHS) Basketball State Championship Team and the UHS State Champion in wrestling to lead the parade. All the Council members agreed with that proposal.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a parade permit for the July 4th Festivities on Sunday, July 4, 2021 beginning at 4:00 pm. Motion resulted as follows:

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

g. COVID-19 & Projects Update

Pool

Mr. Lawson said we continue to work on the repairs to the swimming pool. Last week we filled the deep end and lost two inches of water in 24 hours so that isn't where our big leak is. We then filled up past the deep end and lost 8-10 inches of water in 72 hours. The pool company said the problem may still be in the plumbing and suggested doing a vacuum pressure test. Mr. Lawson said that is something that we can do ourselves, so the public works department is working on getting the equipment to do that.

Local Events

Mr. Lawson said an ISF Sports Camp will be held at the Taylor-Lewis Building in East Stone Gap beginning Monday. The camp is for 5th thru 8th graders and there is no cost for a child to attend. It will run Monday thru Friday next week and they still have openings. Youths will receive instruction in Pickleball, Archery, Basketball, Soccer, Baseball, Fencing, and Football. He said this is a great event and worthy of our support, and if it grows we may ask them to hold it at Bullitt Park in the future.

Mr. Lawson said the annual Tour de Crackers Neck Bike Race will be held this Saturday at 9 am. The route will not go up the mountain this year but it will be extended to 34 miles and include a double loop. He thanked the Police Department for their help with the route.

Mr. Lawson said we held our first Block Party of the season last Friday with a 'DJ On The Roof'. We had fewer cars than expected in the Car Show but local businesses enjoyed more patrons than usual so it was still a success. People enjoyed Cornhole, inflatables, and dancing.

Travel Ball

He said travel ball tournaments were held last weekend on Saturday and Sunday. Lots of people attended and local businesses helped sponsor some of the events. He said the boys baseball team Invaders made enough money to purchase some good catching equipment for their team. On Sunday the girls Virginia Ice softball team hosted a tournament. Mr. Lawson said we would like to have a local team sponsor more tournaments to make money to help maintain the fields.

Juneteenth Celebration

He said a Juneteenth celebration will take place in Italy Bottom Park on June 19th and asked Terran Young to elaborate on their plans. Terran said the event will begin at 11 am with a libation ceremony and a grounding event. There will be games for kids and adults, a free lunch for everyone, various performers, and a basketball tournament. She said different organizations will be represented such as Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards (SAMS), Appalachian Voices, Sexy Sex Ed, and Black in Appalachia (a PBS show out of East Tennessee). She said everyone is welcome to attend.

New Businesses

Mr. Lawson said Smelly's Pet Parlor will be opening a pet grooming business at 324 East 5th Street North between Advance Auto and O'Reilly's. Becca Dutton is the owner, and has asked for assistance with cleanup which we will accommodate as we have done in the past for other businesses.

Mr. Lawson mentioned that the ribbon-cutting for Mr. Automotive will be on Friday, June 18th, at 11:30 am.

Wells Fargo Building

Mr. Lawson said all the old light fixtures at the Wells Fargo building have been replaced with new LED fixtures. The old fixtures will be advertised for sale on GovDeals.com. The wall and glass barrier will be installed in the next few weeks. All the technical equipment from R J Young will be installed after the construction work is completed. He said we wanted to be in the building by July 1st but with the pace work is unfolding it will likely be the second week of July.

Donation

Mr. Lawson said we received a request for a donation of \$300 for the Tour de Crackers Neck Bike Race. He said there is money in the budget to comply with the request, and it is one that we normally do contribute to annually. He asked for Council's approval for this donation.

Mayor Johnson said he wants to support the race and help it improve. Council members were in agreement with the donation.

Structure Fire

Mr. Lawson said the Fire Department responded to a structure fire on Wyandotte Avenue. He said it was one of the largest structures and one of the most beautiful houses on that street. He said the blaze was fierce. The Big Stone Gap Fire Department responded with the Valley Fire Department and the Appalachia Fire Department lending assistance. He said they all did an excellent job and he was especially proud that when a disaster like this happens we have neighboring towns and firefighters that we know we can depend on. And the fact that no other house around the fire was damaged is a tribute to the skill and determination of the firefighters.

Mr. Lawson also expressed appreciation to our Police Department, especially with things as crazy as they are in the world today. He thanked them for keeping us safe.

Election

Mr. Lawson said today is the final day to qualify to run for Council in the November 2021 election. He said he hopes the three current Council members whose terms are running out are running for re-election. He said he will support them in any way he can if they choose to run again. He said this Council has done a lot of good things during the last few years and he hopes that will continue.

**AGENDA ITEM 8
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 9
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. McKinney thanked the Fire and Police Departments and all the Town employees for what they do. He added he will be on the ballot in November.

Ms. Lyke gave her thanks to the employees, adding the Fire Department did an exceptional job on the Wyandotte Avenue fire. She thanked everyone for making the Freedom Chevrolet Birthday Bash a great success. She said the City of Norton is starting an annual Hero Run – this first year they will honor James Lane with a 5K Run on June 25th. She said she attended a meeting about a 9/11 5K Run between Big Stone Gap & Appalachia to honor first responders.

Mr. Hughes echoed his appreciation to all the Town employees. He said it is exciting times to see all the changes taking place in Town.

Mr. Gilley said the house fire on Wyandotte Avenue was unbelievable and the response by all of the fire departments was great.

Mr. Bloomer agreed with all the kudos to the employees. He mentioned there will be a regional track meet at Bullitt Park tomorrow. Huff Daddy BBQ will be serving food at noon for a donation to raise money to help the track team.

Special Council Meeting

Mr. Lawson asked Council to set a Special Council Meeting on June 15th to hold a Public Hearing for the sale of property. Mayor Johnson polled all the Council members to hold the meeting on the 15th at 6:30 pm with the meeting to be held virtually.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council set a Special Council Meeting on June 15th at 6:30 pm for the purpose of holding a Public Hearing to hear comments on the proposed sale of Town property. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Mayor Johnson said he would like to recognize an employee – Turk Hollinger – who was at the Kids Fishing Day at Big Cherry and who was great with everyone there. He said he and Stephen Lawson were having a meeting and was approached by some people who bragged on what a good job our Town Council is doing. Mayor Johnson said he will pass that compliment on to Stephen Lawson. He said he has been on Council for several years and the Town has made great strides with everyone working as a team. The people also mentioned Turk Hollinger by name, saying that Turk helped turn the man's life in the right direction. Mayor Johnson said it's great to see an employee go above and beyond to help people.

Mayor Johnson said the Birthday Bash at Freedom Chevrolet was a great event. He noted it was well-run and organized and he thanked Crystal for her work with the event.

**AGENDA ITEM 10
ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey

Mayor Johnson thanked all the Council members for working together like a well-oiled machine to “get it done”.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

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