

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

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS
505 E 5TH STREET S
BIG STONE GAP, VA**

August 10, 2021

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. 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. Tyler Hughes, Councilman

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Rev. Brad Stapleton of East Stone Gap Methodist Church

AGENDA ITEM 3

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of August 10, 2021 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: Hughes

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Adam Malle, 213 Chestnut Lane, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219

Mr. Malle said he would like to see handicapped accessible picnic tables at the pavilions at Bullitt Park and Italy Bottom Park but realized when he came this evening that Councilmen Tyler Hughes and Bobby Bloomer had already talked to Council about his request at the Workshop last week and the Town had agreed to comply. He thanked Council for their quick action on his request and offered to lend his expertise on any future handicapped accessible projects. He asked about adding a handicapped accessible picnic table at Fraley's Park and a slanted entrance to the pavilion at Italy Bottom Park. Mr. Bloomer said the woodshop instructor at the Union Middle School said if the students are involved in building the tables it will take a few months to complete. Mayor Johnson said the Town would be happy to install a handicapped accessible picnic table and rest area somewhere on the Greenbelt if there was a need for it.

AGENDA ITEM 6

GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop of July 6, 2021.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting of July 13, 2021.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of July, 2021.**
Recommended Action: Received and filed.

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

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

AGENDA ITEM 7

TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mr. Broskey said he did not have an update from last week's report but would be glad to answer any questions. Mr. Lawson asked what the next step is on the proposed sewer project in Southern. Mr. Broskey said they plan to draft a letter to put in a packet to leave at residents' homes to explain what our proposal is to gauge the level of interest.

AGENDA ITEM 8

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Proclamation – Appalachian Training Central Bland Alumni Association**
Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation recognizing the Alumni Association's 50th anniversary. He said their banquet will be held on Saturday at Curklin's.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a proclamation acknowledging the 50th anniversary of the Appalachia Training Central Bland Alumni Association. Motion resulted as follows:

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

b. Proclamation – Smelly’s Pet Parlor

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation recognizing Smelly’s Pet Parlor as a new business in Town.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve a proclamation welcoming Rebekah Dutton, owner of Smelly’s Pet Parlor located at 324 East 5th Street North. Motion resulted as follows:

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

c. Proclamation – Stop N Shop, LLC

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation recognizing the Stop N Shop as a new business in Town.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a proclamation welcoming Terry Michael Ramey, II, owner of Stop N Shop LLC located at 315 Shawnee Avenue East. Motion resulted as follows:

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

d. Cancel October 5th Council Workshop

Mr. Lawson asked Council to consider cancelling the October Council Workshop due to the Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference being held the same week.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that Council cancel the October 5th, 2021 Council Workshop due to members attending the VML Conference. Motion resulted as follows:

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

e. Budget Amendment – Appropriate ARPA Funds

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a public hearing on September 7th at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the proposed amendment to the FY2021-22 budget to incorporate ARPA funds.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that Council authorize a public hearing on September 7, 2021 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on amending the FY2021-2022 budget by \$2,662,268 in revenues and expenses to appropriate the funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act. Motion resulted as follows:

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

f. Ordinance 10-2021 – Sale of Armory Property to Ballad Health

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this ordinance authorizing the sale of the Armory property to Ballad Health.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council adopt Ordinance 10-2021 to approve the sale of the 7.24 acre Armory Property to Ballad Health. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Hughes

g. Ordinance 12-2021 – Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a public hearing on September 7th at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance to create a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area.

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Gilley, that Council authorize a public hearing on September 7, 2021 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance and plan to create a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area.

Discussion:

Mr. Lawson said there have been some changes to the draft ordinance in Council's packet. He said Town Attorney Charles Bledsoe pointed out that we had been too vague in our description of the corridors involved so we tried to be more specific as to the boundaries of the proposed area, primarily because once this ordinance is adopted a new public hearing would be necessary to include each new expansion of the designated area, so we have tried to include as wide an area that is feasible based on interest expressed by current and prospective business owners. He said with this ordinance any licensed ABC vendor would be able to sell alcohol within this designated area at special events, with a limit of 16 events per year. He noted that this is different from the banquet license that the Town obtains when we host a block party.

He distributed an updated draft ordinance with a map of the designated area: from the Trail Buildings down the sidewalk to Clinton Avenue, from Curklin's parking area down the alley to the old Wells Fargo Building, across the sidewalk at The General Store and continuing across to Shawnee Ave, and up to the alley behind the Wood Avenue properties from Allen's Carpet to the new business location on Wood Avenue.

Mayor Johnson asked if this permit would be in effect if the Town had a block party. Mr. Lawson said it would not because our banquet license is sufficient for our block parties. The only exception would be if we wanted to block off a larger area than normal, but in that case we could extend our boundaries with the banquet license.

Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Hughes

h. COVID-19 & Projects Update

COVID-19

Mr. Lawson said the COVID-19 virus is still ramping up in our area with several businesses having to close because of the latest outbreak – the ABC Store, Botts & Botts, and Country Kitchen to name a few, and he noted Ballard’s facilities are filling up fast. He said the State has not mandated any restrictions but commented the Town may need to take measures to protect its citizens. He reinforced the concept that while vaccinated people may still get the virus, they fare much better than those who don’t. He said all the town managers and/or mayors in the county and the Wise County administrators are meeting regularly to discuss options, which include mask mandates or weekly testing, or implementing incentive plans to encourage people to be vaccinated. Mayor Johnson asked how many Town employees have been vaccinated. Ms. Hawkins said about 30 Town employees took the vaccine when it was initially offered.

Multi-Use Building – Bullitt Park

Mr. Lawson said we are restarting work on the multi-use building at Bullitt Park and hope to have it usable by the first home game this season. He said we are trying to get the two teams separated by getting the visitor team dressing room ready. He said concrete has been poured and electrical and plumbing are being worked on in the dressing room areas, and the metal for the roof is now available from Taylor Metal and will be in soon. The public restrooms and concession stands will not be ready for a while yet.

Visitor Center Sign

Mr. Lawson said we have had problems with the letters from the Visitor Center chimney sign falling down so we are taking measures to remedy that. He said we have a new sign with a new design ready to put up. The words “Visitor Center” will not have lights but the sun, mountain, and the words “Big Stone Gap” will be lit up.

Wise County Chamber of Commerce Gala

Mr. Lawson said the Chamber’s Gala has been moved to September 11th due to the increase in COVID-19 cases.

Bland Alumni Association Reunion

Mr. Lawson said the Appalachia Training Central Bland Alumni Association will have its 50th anniversary reunion dinner at Curklin’s this Saturday. He said if anyone wants to attend the Town will pay for their dinner. Ms. Lyke, Mayor Johnson, and Mr. Bloomer indicated they will attend and may bring a guest.

MEOC Walkathon

Mr. Lawson said Mountain Empire Older Citizens 45th Annual Walkathon will be held on Sunday, October 29th on the Greenbelt.

Grand Opening

Mr. Lawson said that Smelly’s Pet Parlor will have their grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony this Saturday at 10:30 am.

Wells Fargo Building

Mr. Lawson said we have contracted someone to pressure wash the exterior, sidewalk and all concrete, and to clean off the parking lot at the Wells Fargo Building. He said he will try to get bids on resurfacing the parking lot before it opens for business. He said we contacted Dell about purchasing computers for the offices but they indicated it would be October before they could supply them. We then contacted PC Tech in Wise who said they could get the computers to us by next week. A plus to that is they are a local company and we have worked with them before so we chose to go with them.

Parks

Mr. Lawson said the Parks & Recreation Department has been measuring areas for possible pickle ball sites. He said the youth and adults who attended camps at the East Stone Gap community center enjoyed the game a lot. He said we are looking at Aviation Road Park, Cadet Park, and Bullitt Park as possible locations, and for those who want to play indoors, we may get the equipment to set up a court in Carnes Gym as a temporary site. He said he will welcome suggestions of other possible locations. Mr. Bloomer said Italy Bottom would be a good site for one.

Mr. Lawson said they took Josh Delp, who is an avid Disc Golf player, to Big Cherry to look for an area to set up a disc golf course up there. Some of the places they looked at are trail areas. They also looked at the Archery Range Pool as a possible location for the course.

He said when looking ahead regarding capital improvement projects, the track around Fraley Park needs attention and some upgrades. That park is where our Disc Golf course is located, but he noted that park is enjoyed in a lot of different ways. He said the fencing is in bad shape but it's still there to discourage people from parking their cars on the grass.

AGENDA ITEM 9**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

AGENDA ITEM 10**COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. McKinney said that P'Nut football opens Saturday night at Bullitt Park. Mr. Lawson added that Flag Football will run for six weeks at the park also and the kids are revved up for their first game.

Ms. Lyke said the Amazing Race will be on August 28th from 2-5 pm and will start at the Visitor Center. Chris Rose and Cody Mabe will be playing at the Block Party after the race.

Mrs. Bailey said the Block Party last week for the slingshot rally was great, with at least 30 slingshots lining the streets. She said the cars traveled from as far away as the US/Canadian border to Big Stone Gap just for the rally. Mr. Lawson commented that another large group will be coming thru on the Jeep routes on the Backroads of the Cumberlands on the Spearhead Trail sites. Spearhead Trails has appointed an interim director, Nick Wood. He is their engineer and understands the goals of the organization. Mrs. Bailey commented that it is amazing that we are drawing all these people to Town.

Mayor Johnson said they moved their camper to Jessie Lea RV Campground and have met some interesting people while there. He said someone he is acquainted with stopped him in Food City and thanked him and the Town leaders for the great job they are doing. Mayor

Johnson said it makes him proud and is an indication that we are on the right track. He said he would like to take brochures to Jessie Lea to distribute to visitors. Mr. Lawson said he should contact Ked Meade and he will supply him with all the brochures he needs.

**AGENDA ITEM 11
ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:37 pm.

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