

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

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

**September 1, 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 September 1, 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

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

Members Present:    Mr. David Gibson, Chairman  
                              Mr. John Morrissey, Vice-Chairman  
                              Mr. Charlie Beverly, Member  
                              Mr. Kent Gilley  
                              Ms. Amy Hubbard  
                              Mr. Lorenzo Rodriguez  
                              Mr. Matthew Bright, Planning Administrator \*  
                                  \*Joined meeting after roll call

Members Absent:    Mrs. Freda Bishop  
                              Ms. Wendy Dillon  
                              Mr. Greg Kress

**AGENDA ITEM 2****JOINT PUBLIC HEARING – Special Use Permit Request by Savida Health**

Mayor Johnson recessed the Council Workshop and opened the Joint Public Hearing. He called for comments from citizens. Hearing no comments, Mayor Johnson closed the Joint Public Hearing and reconvened the Council Workshop.

**AGENDA ITEM 3****REVIEW OF MINUTES**

**Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop (Electronic Attendance) of August 4, 2020 and the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic Attendance) of August 11, 2020.**

No comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 4****TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT****Greenbelt Phase V**

Mr. Broskey said we are still waiting on comments from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on the 90% design we submitted for the Greenbelt bridge.

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

Mr. Broskey said all the final paperwork has been submitted to the Virginia Department of Health for this project and we are waiting on feedback.

**DEQ Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Program**

Mr. Broskey said the Town has been preliminarily awarded \$75,000 from the Department of Environmental Quality for this project. He said we will be moving forward soon.

**AGENDA ITEM 5****TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT****a. Resolution 16-2020 – Effectuate Temporary Changes and Modify Public Meeting and Public Hearing Practices**

Mr. Lawson said this resolution is to update the protocols for public meetings.

**b. ServLine Utilities Protection**

Mr. Lawson said that Council received in their packets an overview of the proposed protection plan from ServLine and a list of questions for them to review. He asked Amanda Hawkins to discuss those questions.

Ms. Hawkins said the first thing is to make sure everyone reviewed the Leak Adjustment Policy and the High-Water-Bill Adjustment Policy. A major difference in the Leak Adjustment Policy is that ServLine makes adjustments based on three months of average usage whereas the Town has always used a six-month average on which to base adjustments. The second thing is that because we do adjustments to water bills for pool fill-ups and other uses of water such as pressure-washing in which the water used does not flow back thru our sewer system, the Town has always adjusted sewer charges so the customer is not billed for what they did not use. If Council wishes to continue to do that we will need a separate policy under ServLine, which is what the High-Water-Bill Adjustment Policy addresses. She asked Council for their input.

Mr. Johnson said he prefers leaving the average usage at a three-month average.

Mr. Hughes asked if we have a business/commercial leak adjustment policy in the works also. Ms. Hawkins replied that we are only planning on implementing the policy for residential

customers at this time but will be looking at a policy for businesses at a later date. She noted that we have very few commercial customers who ask for leak adjustments, and for those that do, we will continue to use our current system of adjusting leaks for the commercial customers.

Mrs. Bailey asked if the proposed agreement contains the high-water usage policy she described. Ms. Hawkins replied that it is not, which is why we need a separate policy.

Ms. Hawkins said the second major consideration is what level of coverage we will offer. There are three tiers: water coverage at \$1.80 per month, sewer coverage at \$1.80 per month, or water and sewer coverage combined at \$3.05 per month. She said we can only offer one tier which will determine the fee for the coverage. Council members discussed the pros and cons of each of the tiers.

The third issue is the administrative fee - do Council members wish to charge a small administrative fee for this policy. She said one option is to roll fee into our rate structure but she is not in favor of this option because funding agencies look at our rate structure to determine their assistance with improvement projects.

The final question concerns the exterior line protection plan. Customers must have the leak adjustment policy to be eligible for this plan. She noted that there is a 10% royalty which Council can forego that will reduce the rate for customers.

Ms. Hawkins noted that if the Town chooses to enter into this agreement with ServLine the policy will not go into effect until February or March of 2021 so we have time to work out all the bugs and make sure everyone is in agreement as to what the policy includes. A discussion ensued as to the cost of the plan versus what we are losing by doing leak adjustments ourselves without a third party involved as well as other aspects of the proposed policy.

Mr. Lawson suggested Council review the information in their packets and continue this discussion in the near future.

### **c. Projects Update**

Mr. Lawson said the first round of the Town paving projects has been advertised and the bid awarded to Boyd's Construction. The first phase will be West 4<sup>th</sup> Street North, the other end of Aviation Road, all of Shelby Avenue, a section of Fox Street, and Shawnee Avenue behind the Jessie Lea Campground. For the second round we are looking at Wallens Ridge Blvd, Washita Avenue, the back of Bullitt Park at the tennis courts, sections of the hill going to the swimming pool, and Oakview Cemetery. We are trying to time it to complete the paving this year before the asphalt plants shut down which will save us about \$90,000. He asked for Council's input on any locations they may want to add to the list.

Mr. Lawson said that the Town has submitted applications to VDOT for their Smart-Scale Projects for upgrades to certain intersections and roads in Town.

He said that work began this week on the Mutual Building's third floor. Hamilton Construction will be doing the work. We have given them permission to park their vehicles on our property behind the building.

Curklin's has requested that the Town allow them to install four poles in the pavement of our parking lot to construct four awning-covered spaces to continue their outdoor dining. Mr. Lawson said he is in favor of assisting them but wants Council's input.

He said construction will begin next week on the co-work spaces in the basement of the Mutual Building. This work has been held up because of requirements for matching funds, but now we can submit reimbursement requests to the Virginia Tobacco Commission for money that we have spent in getting it to this stage.

He said we rented a 135' lift to cut trees on Proctor Circle that was endangering a house on Clinton Avenue. We also used the lift to reattach letters that had fallen off the Visitor Center.

The Visitor Center is undergoing a deep-cleaning process so we've had to move furniture out of the building until floors are waxed.

The WI-FI installation is still two weeks out because of problems getting some of the equipment in, but broadband is ready and waiting to be installed.

Local businesses with less than 20 employees are eligible for a one-time grant from the Lenowisco Regional Small Business Recovery Program. The grant is for up to \$15,000 to offset the economic impact by the COVID-19 pandemic and will be administered by the City of Norton on behalf of all the neighboring counties under the oversight of Lenowisco's management team.

Mr. Lawson said we have some members of Savida Health present tonight. He said that Andrew Ward and his staff gave a tour of their facility in Abingdon to Mayor Johnson, Vice-Mayor Bailey, Town Clerk/Treasurer Amanda Hawkins, and himself. He said it was a very clean, well-organized and efficient facility. Mayor Johnson remarked that it was not over-crowded with people, and he was impressed with the way they treated everyone. He added that no drugs are kept on sight and all medications are administered by prescription. He recommended that Council approve their request for a Special Use Permit. Mrs. Bailey added that they have only been open since November and have at least 350 patients, of which at least 40 would be closer to the Big Stone Gap facility.

Mr. Lawson noted that the Virginia Municipal League (VML) Conference will be a virtual event this year on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The Mayor's Institute will be a virtual event also on September 24<sup>th</sup>. Any Council members wishing to attend either meeting should contact Amanda Hawkins to make arrangements.

#### **d. COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Lawson said that the Town currently has one positive COVID-19 case. The Health Department has contacted a second employee who was in contact with the positive case to inform him he is also quarantined for 14 days, and we anticipate a third employee to be contacted as well. The name of the employees will not be released but the Town will be following the guidelines of the Virginia Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

### **AGENDA ITEM 6**

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### **a. Planning Commission – Special Use Permit - Crematorium**

Matthew Bright, Planning Administrator, said he was contacted by Michael Riebe of Holding Funeral home to request the Planning Commission table the funeral home's application for a Special Use Permit for a crematorium to be installed on the grounds of the funeral home in Town. Mr. Riebe said he is exploring other sites to place the crematorium.

Mr. Bright said the Planning Commission will be reviewing a change/update to the Comprehensive Plan regarding the Smart-Scale applications the Town has submitted to VDOT.

### **AGENDA ITEM 7**

#### **COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mrs. Bailey thanked Savida Health and Andrew Ward for the tour of their facility in Abingdon. She said she thinks the facility would be a good asset for our Town. She said she has had comments from some people that the ball fields and gym should be open. Mrs. Bailey said she explained that the gym is open by reservation. She asked Mr. Lawson to explain the current situation with the ball fields. Mr. Lawson said that ball practices were suspended to be in line with the schools' decision to go 100% virtual. He asked Council members for their opinions. Council members were all in favor of staying the course until schools go back to in-person instruction.

All the Council members encouraged everyone to stay safe.

Mr. Hughes thanked the Planning Commission and Savida Health for attending tonight. He thanked the Town crews, the Town Manager, and Ms. Hawkins for answering all their questions tonight.

Mr. Gilley said he thinks Curklin's adding permanent outdoor seating is a great idea.

Mayor Johnson thanked Mr. Lawson and Chief Hamm for an eventful and enlightening morning. He thanked our policemen and first responders, and Savida Health for a great tour.

**AGENDA ITEM 8  
ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned 7:43 pm.**

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