

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

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

September 8, 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 8, 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

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. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Mayor Gary Johnson.

AGENDA ITEM 3

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Gilley, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of September 8, 2020 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

**AGENDA ITEM 4
COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

No comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 5
GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop (Electronic) of August 4, 2020.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting (Electronic) of August 11, 2020.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of August, 2020.
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

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

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

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

Mr. Broskey said there were no updates to his report from the Workshop.

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

- a. **Special Use Permit Request – Savida Health**
Matthew Bright said the recommendation from the Planning Commission for a Special Use Permit for Savida Health has been updated to stipulate that no medications of any kind may be stored or dispensed at the Big Stone Gap facility with the exception of medications approved for the treatment of opioid overdose. He said this would protect the Town should any charges of nuisance be levied against Savida Health.

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve the issuance of a Special Use Permit to Savida Health per the conditions stated.

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve issuance of a Special Use Permit to Savida Health to operate an outpatient drug and alcohol treatment facility in Cloverleaf Square, according to the provisions of Article 6, Sections 5 .1 and 5.2 of the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Big Stone Gap, with an additional condition of said permit issuance, as authorized by Article 6, Section 5.2 (F), being that no medications of any kind are to be stored or dispensed on site at this facility. Drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of opioid overdose are specifically exempt from this additional condition. Motion resulted as follows:

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

b. Resolution 16-2020 – Effectuate Temporary Changes and Modify Public Meeting and Public Hearing Practices

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this resolution to make temporary changes to public meeting procedures.

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve Resolution 16-2020 being a resolution to effectuate temporary changes in certain deadlines and to modify public meeting and public hearing practices and procedures to address continuity of operations associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic Disaster. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: McKinney

c. Projects and COVID-19 Updates

Mr. Lawson said Wise County has 364 positive cases of the COVID-19 virus, 32 hospitalizations, and 5 deaths; the City of Norton has 31 cases, 3 hospitalizations, and 0 deaths; and Lee County has 232 cases, 21 hospitalizations, and 4 deaths. At Town Hall the employee who tested positive is back to work and the two co-workers who came into contact with him were quarantined but did not test positive. The second co-worker has one more day of quarantine and then all employees will be back to work and healthy.

Mr. Lawson said that outgoing water bills have a message on them to urge anyone who is past due to please contact the Town to make arrangements to get caught up. The grace period for late fees and penalties for all taxes and fees will soon end and outstanding bills will need to be addressed. Ms. Hawkins added that penalties and interest have been suspended for all the tax and fees accounts such as meals taxes and transient occupancy taxes. The only exception is utility bills, but she noted that we have worked with those customers on a case-by-case basis to assist them with paying their water bills on time and preventing penalties from being levied. She added that if we continue with the suspension of penalties and interest on our tax and fee accounts we will be faced with having to deal with an ordinance change to address late fees levied against Personal Property Taxes and Real Estate Taxes that will be due soon.

Mr. Lawson said that the Water Department is calling customers who are struggling with paying their bills during the COVID-19 crisis to let them know that the Family Crisis Center in Norton will assist with utility account payments if they meet their qualifications.

He said he has visited most of the small businesses that were eligible for the Lenowisco Small Business Grant for \$15,000. This funding is a first-come, first-served basis so applications should be submitted as soon as possible.

Mr. Lawson said the water plant master meter is at the lowest average since March 2018. There are two known leaks that we have been unable to locate the source of, but he said the water crews are doing a great job trying to improve water accountability.

He said we have had some complaints about the size and type of gravel used on Big Cherry road. He said he talked to John Browning who is doing the work there about the situation. We have delivered some crusher run gravel to see if that helps and will send more up this week. Mayor Johnson commented that Mr. Browning has been doing a great job and he is very appreciative of John's willingness to do this for the Town, and emphasized that it is just a matter of getting the right size of stone to put down. Mr. Lawson noted that the top portion

needs heavier equipment to work up there but the road is in pretty good shape. McFall Excavating will hopefully be able to do that work soon.

Mr. Lawson said our WI-FI equipment is finally in and will be installed at 9:00 am next Monday. Scott County Telephone Co-op will be doing the installation.

He said that he has had a lot of inquiries as to the status of our parks and ball fields. He discussed the situation with other county managers at his monthly Managers Meeting today. He learned that the City of Norton parks and fields are currently open; Coeburn's parks and fields are also open, but they are having crews clean 3-4 times a day; St. Paul's parks are closed and their basketball rims are still down, but the fields remain open; Appalachia is in the process of moving their skate park but their fields are open; and both the Town of Wise and Big Stone Gap's parks and fields are closed at this time. He asked for Council's input.

Mr. Gilley said he has had more calls about the gym than anything with people asking if they could play basketball by making a reservation. Mayor Johnson said he thinks we should wait a bit before opening the gym for sports because of the close contact possibilities. Vice-Mayor Bailey agreed with Mayor Johnson that it isn't safe enough yet to open the gym, especially for employees who would be required to clean the areas.

Mr. Lawson said the parks and fields will remain closed until further notice.

AGENDA ITEM 8 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Matthew Bright, Planning Administrator, said the Planning Commission met last Wednesday to review some changes made to the Comprehensive Plan. These changes are required by VDOT to consider the Town's applications for their Smart-Scale Program. We have two locations we have applied to VDOT for upgrades: 1) intersection of Gilley Avenue and East 5th Street South, and 2) turn lanes at Gilley Avenue and Carter Street at the top of Country Boy Hill and in front of Burger King. VDOT requires that these upgrades be included in the Comprehensive Plan data. Mr. Bright noted that any changes to the Comprehensive Plan necessitates a Joint Public Hearing of the Planning Commission and Council.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Gilley, that Council authorize a Joint Public Hearing with the Planning Commission on October 6, 2020 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment regarding interim changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: McKinney

AGENDA ITEM 9 COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Hughes thanked Amanda Hawkins for sending Council a presentation on ServLine explaining the leak protection policy the Town is considering for its customers.

Ms. Lyke said she has had a lot of calls about bears in the area and what can be done about them. Mayor Johnson said he called the game warden for advice. The game warden said that if people put out food for birds or pets they are also feeding bears as well. Mayor Johnson said that trash must be kept out of the open and everything kept clean to discourage them from staying in the area. He said that if a bear behaves in a physically threatening manner the

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will relocate the animal, but only in life-threatening situations.

Mrs. Bailey reminded everyone that the Southwest Virginia museum will host their Songs of Service on Friday, September 11th from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. The service honors first responders and will have music and food trucks available.

Mr. Bloomer asked everyone to stay safe.

Mr. Gilley asked about the status of the camera at the boat dock at Big Cherry. Ms. Hawkins said that Matthew Bright is still trying to contact the proper people to see when they can get that camera installed. Mr. Lawson commented that the owner of the company we had reached out to died recently in a tragic accident and the company is trying to keep up with their workload. He said the alternate company we talked to is asking a very high price to do the installation, so we are still exploring options.

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone for what they do. He commented that some of the stop signs are covered with weeds and need to be cleared. He noted that Gilley and Wyandotte Avenues have been especially busy lately. He said if anyone has questions or complaints to call one of the Town staff or council members to let them know.

AGENDA ITEM 10 ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: McKinney

Meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

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