

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

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

September 14, 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. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
 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. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Rev. Timothy Robinson of Trinity Methodist Church

AGENDA ITEM 3

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Hughes, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of September 14, 2021 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

No comments.

AGENDA ITEM 6**GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop of August 3, 2021.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting of August 10, 2021.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of August 2021.**
Recommended Action: Received and filed.
- d. **Treasurer's Reports for the month of June 2021.**
Recommended Action: Received and filed.

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

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

AGENDA ITEM 7**TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT****Greenbelt Phase V**

Mr. Broskey said we received the Categorical Exclusion from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for the Greenbelt Phase V Project. He said VDOT has a few more steps to go thru before we get permission to bid the project.

System Wide Water Loss Project

Mr. Broskey said they received and replied to comments regarding the railroad crossing permits for the System Wide Water Loss Project. He said the fees for the two permits we need are very high, around \$20,000 each, when they should be around \$5,000 to \$6,000 each. He said we will try to negotiate those fees down.

Sewer Proposal – Southern Section

Mr. Broskey said the proposed extension of our sewer system into the Southern is not looking good, with only 14 residents expressing interest in the project so far. He said they will be going back out to homes to continue the canvassing effort.

Big Cherry Trails

Mr. Broskey said we had our initial kick-off meeting with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to discuss funding. While we are waiting on an agreement for the Town, he said we have started working on the environmental requirements.

Water Line on Gilley Ave

Mr. Lawson asked Jon to contact Chase Buchanan regarding the 12" water line along Gilley Avenue that runs parallel to VDOT's upcoming road-widening project.

**AGENDA ITEM 8
TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT**

a. Proclamation – Far Fetched Grooming LLC

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation welcoming Far Fetched Grooming as a new business in Cloverleaf Square.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve a proclamation welcoming Far Fetched Grooming LLC owned by Kaylyn Laws located at 320 Cloverleaf Square Suite D1. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Lyke

b. Proclamation – Big Stone Gap Pottery Shop

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this proclamation welcoming the Big Stone Gap Pottery Shop as a new business in Town.

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve a proclamation welcoming the Big Stone Gap Pottery Shop owned by Stephen Murray located at 215 Wood Avenue E. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Lyke

c. Budget Amendment – Appropriate ARPA Funds

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this amendment to appropriate the American Rescue Plan funds into the FY2021-22 Budget.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by McKinney, that Council approve an amendment to the FY2021-22 budget of \$2,662,268 in revenues and expenditures to appropriate the American Rescue Plan funds. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Lyke

d. Ordinance 12-2021 – Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this ordinance to establish a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve Ordinance 12-2021 being an ordinance establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Lyke

e. Projects Update

Grand Opening

Mr. Lawson said the date for the Big Stone Gap Pottery Shop ribbon-cutting ceremony is September 20th but the time has changed from 2 pm to 4 pm that afternoon.

EarthLink

Mr. Lawson said today was a big day for Wise County. EarthLink is a high-speed internet service provider and is putting a customer service center in Norton as a Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) project. RIFA is a partnership of all the counties in the Lenowisco area (Dickenson, Lee, Scott, Wise and the City of Norton) working together. Mr. Lawson noted that the legislators in attendance today in support of the project were not all representatives of our region which shows the importance of this project to the whole state.

EarthLink is based in Atlanta, Georgia and has committed to 285 jobs at the call center (those jobs will come from overseas). They will start out with 150 jobs initially, with the hope of reaching 500 employees eventually. He noted the CEO of EarthLink, Glenn Goad, is a native of our region who played baseball for J. J. Kelly at Wise and is pleased to bring business to our area.

Bluegrass Festival in 2022

Mr. Lawson said he, Mayor Johnson, Ked Meade, and Alan Maggard met with the bluegrass festival people last week. He said we got a really good price on entertainment so we booked Blue Highway for a 2022 concert at Bullitt Park on October 7th and 8th of 2022. He said we will be learning how to measure and mark off RV spots at Frog Level and will talk to Rick Gilliam about more potential spots across the river. We anticipate this being a huge event for our area, with the only downside being possible minor damage to the field that we can and will repair. He has informed the coordinator for MECC's Home Crafts Days that our event will take place the weekend before theirs. She was very excited about that and offered her assistance in any way she can.

Steak Cook-Off

Mr. Lawson asked Steve Hamm for an update on the Steak Cook-Off plans. Chief Hamm said we have 17 registered teams with potentially 7 more teams having expressed their intent to sign up. He said some of the entrants are coming from Florida, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, and Texas and he expects a really good event.

Prayers for Families

Mr. Lawson asked for prayers for Crystal Lyke's father, who is in critical condition, and for the family of Johnny Cubine who passed away today.

Water Line Break – Strawberry Patch

Mr. Lawson said we responded to a main water line break in Strawberry Patch today where water was spewing out from under a building that was built on top of the water line. On further investigation, it was discovered that the line break was several feet away but was being directed by several piles of debris to flow under the building. We repaired the line, but advised the property owner that he would need to relocate his building because if we have to reach that line in the future for any potential breaks we would have to take the building down.

Multi-Purpose Building – Bullitt Park

He said the metal roof is now on the multi-purpose building at Bullitt Park and the visiting team was able to use the locker room at Friday's football game. We will continue to finish the work on the restrooms and concession stand. He noted that if anyone has suggestions or questions to please contact him.

Vice-Mayor Bailey asked how many restrooms would be in the new building. Mr. Lawson said around 24 to 28 restrooms for the ladies, commenting that it is set up to accommodate the Fourth of July crowds.

Mayor Johnson asked if the existing building could be converted into a pavilion. Mr. Lawson said that is the plan at this time. He said they had first thought to make a parking area for the referees, but decided the referees will continue to park where they are. He said we will probably take down the current concession stand to clean up the end zone and make it look nice.

Mr. Lawson commented the next thing to be finished on the new building will be the two-part restrooms that open up to the playground, then the big restrooms, the concession stand, then fencing for the rest of the park.

Delinquent Utility Accounts

Mr. Lawson said that out of the 150 or so customers whose water was cut off for non-payment, only four have reached out to him in an antagonistic manner. Around 25% of the customers who were cut off have found a way to bring their account up to date and get their water service back on.

AGENDA ITEM 9**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

AGENDA ITEM 10**COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. Hughes said the Dominion Energy Company is partnering with a nature conservancy to bring a large-scale solar project to an old Red Onion mine site. He said he has received comments from residents concerned about trash at Town Hall being dragged by bears onto the Greenbelt that is a mess and eventually ends up in the river. Mr. Lawson said we are applying for a grant from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) to have bear-proof dumpsters at Town Hall, and at least three other businesses have applied for that grant as well. The grant is a 30% match from the recipient.

Mrs. Bailey said she is excited about the EarthLink project in Norton.

Mayor Johnson said that apparently some people have forgotten about bears in the neighborhood in Southern, especially in the trailer park area, and trash has been strewn everywhere. Mr. Lawson said if loose trash is in an area that has a lot of traffic we have asked our sanitation workers pick it up even though it's not in our code requiring them to do so. He said we can suggest the trailer park owners put in bear-proof dumpsters, but it's difficult to enforce because our code does not specifically require bear-proof containers.

In reference to ordinances, Mr. Lawson said before COVID-19 surged we had asked leaders from Wise County and surrounding towns to meet and discuss ordinances and how to get the best impact from them because it's useless to have an ordinance that cannot be enforced. He

said we've had this issue with signs on private property as well as trash containers. He commented that if we can't enforce the ordinance prohibiting signs on private property, why have an ordinance addressing it. He said we have selected a couple of houses, one on 6th Avenue that has kudzu overflowing its boundaries and one that is a safety danger, as well as the garbage issue on Pearl Avenue and the junkyard behind West End Baptist Church, to use as examples for study and to see how the rest of the county is enforcing these or similar issues. He said we may try to get Chuck Slemp's office to weigh in on how to enforce ordinances regarding these issues.

Mr. Lawson added he has had calls about closing the alleyway behind Freda's Magic Mirror. He explained that the alley is only closed to thru traffic – business owners can still get to the back side of their businesses. He said if Council members are receiving calls about this to let him know.

AGENDA ITEM 11 ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

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