

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

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

**November 3, 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 December 1, 2020, at 6:30 pm, is to be conducted electronically as authorized by Resolution 16-2020 adopted on September 8, 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. 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

Those Absent:           Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman  
                                  Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police\*  
                                  \*Joined at end of meeting

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

**Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop (Electronic Attendance) of October 6, 2020 and the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic Attendance) of October 13, 2020.**

No comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT**

**Greenbelt Phase V**

Mr. Broskey said that in talking with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) we expect to receive our first approved Joint Permit Application (JPA) from the USACE and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) by next week for the bridge construction of our

Greenbelt Phase V Project. The VMRC part of the permit was published a couple of weeks ago so permitting is moving quickly. He said they expect to advertise for bids by the summer of 2021.

### **DEQ Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Program**

Mr. Broskey said they have been able to locate most of the manholes in our sewer system for the Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Program. Because of the wet weather, they were able to do some testing on the lines and found quite a bit of inflow and infiltration (I&I) coming into the system, and he cautioned that it's a long process we will be working on.

### **System-Wide Water Loss Study Project**

Mr. Broskey said they continue to work on the preliminary plans for the System-Wide Water Loss Study Project and hope to submit them to the Virginia Department of Health very soon.

## **AGENDA ITEM 4**

### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

#### **a. Resolution 22-2020 – Interim Update to Comprehensive Plan SMART Scale Projects**

Mr. Lawson said this resolution is to authorize an interim update to our Comprehensive Plan to include two Big Stone Gap highway improvement projects in the Virginia Department of Transportation SMART Scale Projects.

#### **b. ServLine Update**

Mr. Lawson asked Amanda Hawkins to summarize the information provided to Council for the proposed ServLine program.

Ms. Hawkins explained that the information was about water leak adjustments the Town has made over the last three fiscal years, and what the largest leaks were. Our current policy is that the customer pays their regular bill while half of the overage is written off, leaving the customer to pay the remaining half. With enrollment in ServLine, the customer would only pay the monthly premium and not be responsible for paying the remainder of the overage that was not adjusted off.

Ms. Hawkins said there were a couple of questions about extending the enrollment period and whether or not we can leave the program once we joined it. She said that the answer to both questions is yes.

Another question was whether we could initiate this program 'in-house' rather than contracting with another vendor. Ms. Hawkins included ServLine's response to that question in the information she provided to Council.

#### **c. COVID-19 & Projects Update COVID-19**

Mr. Lawson said we are seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases: for the year, Wise County has reached a total of 734 cases, 47 hospitalizations, and 10 deaths; the City of Norton - 54 cases, 5 hospitalizations, and 0 deaths; Lee County - 592 cases, 33 hospitalizations, and 10 deaths; and Scott County - 474 cases, 33 hospitalizations, and 7 deaths.

Mr. Lawson said that the percentage of positives has increased and the Governor has been emphatic in telling us that if numbers keep rising there will be additional measures taken. The last seven-day totals show that Wise County has had 96 cases, with 24 of those in the Big Stone Gap/Appalachia area. He commented that this virus is real and encouraged anyone who goes outside of their family area to please wear a mask and take extra precautions.

## **Business Assistance Grants**

Mr. Lawson noted that several businesses in Town have received help from Lenowisco grants that were available. He said that the Rebuild Virginia Grant Program is planning another cycle of grants (up to \$100,000) with new criteria that allows every business to apply. He said we will have the information posted on Facebook and our website shortly.

## **Christmas**

Mr. Lawson said that, at their monthly Manager's meeting, he learned that most towns have decided to not hold a Christmas Parade this year. He suggested that we still do our Christmas Tree Lighting while encouraging small groups and mask-wearing at Miners Park, and he asked for Council's input of some things we could do in lieu of a parade in addition to the tree-lighting ceremony. He commented that the Town of Appalachia is having their Fire Department take Santa to different communities within the town on a fire truck to give out candy to kids, which is a unique idea. He said we could do something similar or maybe have Santa sitting on the sleigh at the Visitor Center to pass out candy via a makeshift slide to limit any close contact.

Mr. Lawson also noted that the Parks & Recreation and Visitor Center crews have been working hard to repaint and repurpose the Whoville Christmas display into a Santa's Village display for Miners Park. He said we also plan on having our Greenbelt in Lights again this year. He asked anyone who has a vehicle that can transport people around the Greenbelt to let him know if they are interested in helping with the rides. We already have about 80 people signed up to put up a display, and are still recruiting to try to reach our goal of 100 displays.

## **Town Events and Activity**

Mr. Lawson said that a little over 600 people voted today at Carnes Gym, and when added to the 2,319 that took advantage of Early Voting over the last three weeks at Carnes Gym, around 3,000 people will have voted at our location when the counting is done.

He noted that all the paving projects have been completed in Town.

Mr. Lawson said that the WanderLOVE video is in the process of being edited.

He said that Public Works is behind on brush and leaf pickup because of the resignations of two crew members. Also, the recent rains caused some debris buildup at the dam so some of the crewmen were diverted to correct that issue. He said we are in the process of hiring replacements and expect to be back to normal very shortly.

Mr. Lawson said the Town crews replaced the pipes running under the road to renew the 2" water line going across the river in East Stone Gap to restore the water pressure to some homes there. The insulation that came with the pipe would not fit in the sleeve, so we are waiting on new insulation to arrive to finish that project.

He said that the Town cancelled the Veterans Day Parade due to COVID-19, but noted that Chief Hamm has made a banner to salute veterans that will be displayed at the Visitor Center along with an American flag on Veterans Day.

Mr. Lawson said he met with representatives of Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Friends of Southwest Virginia, and Spearhead Trails about the ARC Grant that included a Pump Track for Big Stone Gap. Mr. Lawson said that the Town's portion of the grant (\$20,000) was not enough to actually build a proper Pump Track, so we may apply for more funding from a different source. He said that the application was submitted by Friends of Southwest Virginia two years ago, but the environmental requirements were not completed within the allotted time frame (two-year cycle ending October 2020), so we have applied for an extension to complete that work.

**AGENDA ITEM 5  
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

**AGENDA ITEM 6  
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mrs. Bailey said that Rev. Sandra Jones expressed her thanks to the Town for paving the road at Oakview Cemetery. She said she had a citizen call her to compliment the Town on extremely clean restrooms under the bleachers at Bullitt Park, so she passed her compliments on to Gary Harris and the Parks & Recreation crews.

Mr. Lawson mentioned that we have had problems with someone sleeping in the Greenbelt restrooms. That person has been notified by the Police Department that they are not to be on the property again, so if he is seen there in the future he can be charged. He noted that this is the same person that has been reported to have been walking behind women on the Greenbelt to the extent they had felt very uncomfortable. Chief Hamm commented that he had given that letter to Charles Bledsoe for his review and had not actually delivered it to the perpetrator. Mr. Bledsoe said he will review the letter and have a response by the end of the week.

Mr. Gilley thanked everyone and encouraged everyone to wear masks in public. He asked about the status of the multi-purpose building at Bullitt Park. Mr. Lawson said that Huff's began laying block yesterday and are making headway.

Mr. Bloomer encouraged everyone to stay safe.

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone for attending the meeting tonight. He said that what he has seen of the paving in Town looks great and agreed that the paving at Oakview looks really nice. He complimented Gary Harris and the Parks & Recreation crew for the excellent job they did on the handicapped fishing piers. He said they still look good even after the downpours we have had recently. He asked if the paving of the piers will have to wait until next year. Mr. Lawson said they will be paved before the asphalt plant closes for the winter. Mayor Johnson encouraged everyone to stay safe.

**AGENDA ITEM 7  
ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned 6:59 pm.**

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