

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

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

**November 10, 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 November 10, 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. All votes called for were roll call votes.**

**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 L. Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer  
Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

Those Absent: Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

**INVOCATION by Mayor Gary Johnson.**

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA**

**Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Lyke, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of November 10, 2020 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:**

**Roll Call Vote:**

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

**AGENDA ITEM 4  
COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

No comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 5  
GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop (Electronic) of October 6, 2020.  
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting (Electronic) of October 13, 2020.  
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.**
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of October, 2020.  
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**
- d. **Treasurer's Reports for the month of July, 2020.  
Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

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

**Roll Call Vote:**

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

**Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

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

Mr. Broskey said they will begin smoke testing of our sewer lines next week, depending on the weather. He said they will post a public notice once they work out the wording and schedules. They will also hand out flyers to home owners and notify the Fire Department before they begin testing.

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

- a. **Resolution 22-2020 – Interim Update to Comprehensive Plan SMART Scale Projects**  
Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this resolution to authorize an interim update to our Comprehensive Plan to include two highway improvement projects to be funded by VDOT's SMART Scale Program.

**Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve Resolution 22-2020 being a resolution approving an interim update to the Comprehensive Plan to include two Virginia Department of Transportation's SMART Scale Project ID 181 and Project ID 182. Motion resulted as follows:**

**Roll Call Vote:**

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

**Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

**b. Budget Amendment – Virginia Tobacco Commission Grant-Mutual Co-Workspace**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a public hearing for a budget amendment to increase the FY2020-21 revenue and expenses for a VTC Grant for the Mutual Co-Workspace Project.

**Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Lyke, that Council authorize a public hearing on December 1, 2020 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on a budget amendment to the FY2020-2021 budget to increase General Fund revenues and expenses by \$250,263.00 for a Virginia Tobacco Commission Grant for the Mutual Building Co-Workspace Project. Motion resulted as follows:**

**Roll Call Vote:**

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

**Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None**

**c. Projects & COVID-19 Updates**

Mr. Lawson said we have had a lot of calls for leaves and debris pickups recently. He said that our street crews are back on schedule but as soon as we pick up leaves, residents rake up more. He added that we will work on Saturday to try to catch up.

Mr. Lawson said that we will lay a new water line on Rebecca Road to replace the old galvanized line and will extend the line to add two new customers at the end of the road. The cost will be around \$2,000 and we will do that project in-house at our expense.

He said that the Co-Workspace Project at the Mutual Building is moving along – everything is framed out, the walls are up in the offices and conference room with their first coat of paint. He said that window frames went in this week and they are working on the restrooms now. He noted that this is very labor-intensive work - dirt and debris is being removed by filling five-gallon buckets and carrying them upstairs to trucks for disposal. The space sits below Town sewer lines so everything must be pumped up to reach the system. He said they hope to be done with the renovations by the end of November.

Mr. Lawson said that work on the multi-purpose building is moving quickly. He said that Michael Huff is laying block and has finished Phase I for the outside walls. Gap Partnership is working on plans for Phase II which will include getting the outside walls up and the building under roof before winter. In response to a question from Mayor Johnson, Mr. Lawson said the corner that was damaged had to be removed all the way down to the foundation and built back.

Mr. Lawson said there was flooding at Big Cherry around the dam that caused silt and debris that had to be cleaned up. He said that everything is okay now.

He said that he and Duane Miller from Lenowisco met with Scott County Telephone Coop (SCTC) this morning. SCTC installed WIFI in the areas around the Visitor Center, Miners Park, and up to the Dollar General area as well as the soccer field at Town Hall. He said the work was done to our satisfaction but noted that an announcement will be postponed until the other towns have their work completed. The next part of the project will be funded by the Town and will concentrate on improving the WIFI at Bullitt Park.

Mr. Lawson said the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is behind in serving customers but is making appointments for regular services such as license renewals and titles. He said the DMV recommends that if your tags are expired to leave the plate off the vehicle and keep the appointment confirmation in the car in case you are pulled over by the county or state troopers. DMV said the local and state police are okay with no tags and an appointment confirmation.

He said the banner honoring veterans is up at the Visitor Center and will serve in lieu of a Veterans Day Parade. The American flag will be raised at 8:00 AM Wednesday morning.

Mr. Lawson said that Wise County is “blowing up” with COVID-19 cases and is becoming more serious all the time. He noted that Heritage Hall has an ongoing outbreak. He said that we had over 200 motorcycles in Town this weekend. He noted that while it was for a good cause, it was difficult to have them maintain social distancing. He said we tried to separate them as best we could, we loaned out tables, and we obtained permission from property owners for them to have enough space to park their bikes.

He said the Town will have a Christmas Tree Lighting at Miners Park on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. The event will encourage social distancing and everything will be broadcast on our social media sites. Santa will be on stage and Santa’s elves will help pass candy from Santa to the kids. Carolers will be singing during the event also.

Mr. Lawson said that the Christmas Tree Lighting will be our main event during the season, but added that we will be doing rides for the Greenbelt in Lights throughout December. He said we will ask families in close groups to schedule private tours to encourage social distancing. Also, this year we are varying from our Whoville theme in Miners Park to a Christmas Village theme. The Parks & Recreation crews and volunteers have worked hard to covert the buildings for this change.

The Town donated \$250 to Wise County Social Services (WCSS) for the second year in a row for their Adult Protection Services Program. The same dollar amount donation will also go toward the Foster Care Christmas Fund, which we have donated to for the past three years. The donation will enable WCSS to give a gift card to each family in the program.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

## **AGENDA ITEM 9 COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. McKinney asked everyone to stay safe and have a good Thanksgiving.

Ms. Lyke thanked Stephen Lawson for everything he does for the Town. She said she lost her grandmother to COVID-19 and would like to encourage everyone, especially young people, to take the virus very seriously. She said she is glad we are able to do the Greenbelt in Lights this year and thanked Mayor Johnson for donating his time every year to drive folks around the Greenbelt. She said this gives residents hope and she encouraged everyone to stay safe and have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mr. Hughes expressed condolences to Ms. Lyke on the death of her grandmother. He echoed her hopes that everyone will understand the seriousness of this situation. He suggested that Council think about a strong PR message to its citizens to help curb the rise in cases. He asked everyone to stay safe and healthy and have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mr. Gilley thanked the Town employees for all they do and asked everyone to stay safe and have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mr. Bloomer also extended condolences to Ms. Lyke. He said we need to push to make the Greenbelt in Lights special this year. He expressed appreciation of the Town and first responders. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Ms. Lyke asked if Council could put up a decoration on the Greenbelt encouraging everyone to wear masks and take precautions concerning the virus. All the Council members

agreed that was a good idea. Mr. Lawson agreed it was a great idea and said they could have any spot on the Greenbelt that they want.

Mrs. Bailey said she is sorry Ms. Lyke lost her grandmother. She thanked David Bailey for doing rides on the Greenbelt every year since its beginning, adding that he will be doing it again this year. She said she had the pleasure of meeting with the local Girl Scout Troop last night to discuss Town government and how it works. She commented that it was a challenge because the girls were between the ages of five and ten years old. She reminded everyone that Everyn Rutherford had come before Council to discuss a Girl Scout project she wanted to do to put waste stations along the Greenbelt for pet owners. Mrs. Bailey said that Everyn's mother informed her that their funding had come thru and they have ordered eight waste stations. Mrs. Bailey asked if the Town has an up-to-date financial report. Ms. Hawkins responded that we cannot finalize the reports until the fiscal year that ends in June has been closed and the auditors review our reports in October. She said an up-to-date report is ready and will be available at the December Council meeting. Mrs. Bailey said that will be fine and thanked everyone for their hard work. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mr. Lawson asked if he could comment on the financial report. He said he doesn't say enough about his staff. He said that government accounting is a little crazy on its own but this year has been even crazier with the pandemic. He noted that the auditors begin doing their audit reports each year with the Town of Big Stone Gap because our staff is the best at it. He said they work tirelessly, they stay late, and they never complain - and he is so proud of them.

Mayor Johnson added his condolences to Ms. Lyke on the passing of her grandmother. He agreed that Ms. Lyke's suggestion of a Greenbelt in Lights display for Council is a good idea. He said that his grandson was exposed to the virus but was fortunate to test negative. He said the seriousness of the virus doesn't seem real until you are hit close to home. He thanked the Town employees for doing a wonderful job and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

## **AGENDA ITEM 10 ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, 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 7:26 pm.**

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