

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

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

January 03, 2023

6:30 PM

AGENDA ITEM 1

Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice-Mayor Bailey 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. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

Those Absent: Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

AGENDA ITEM 2

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of December 6, 2022, and the Regular Council Meeting of December 13, 2022.

AGENDA ITEM 3

TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

Mr. Broskey said he is ready to set up a pre-construction meeting for the Greenbelt Phase V Project. He noted the contractor has been working on shop drawings for the bridge and the project is moving forward.

Big Cherry Trails

Mr. Broskey said he has no updates on the Big Cherry Trails Project.

East Stone Surveys

Mr. Broskey said they hope to be back in the East Stone Gap neighborhood on Monday to continue their income surveys to determine interest in a water system upgrade. He said Lenowisco will assist as needed. Ms. Hawkins asked if they could put something on social media to let

residents know what the survey is for. Mr. Broskey said he will send her the letter Stephen Lawson signed so she can have that done. Councilman Hughes asked him to send it to him and he will post it as well.

AGENDA ITEM 4 TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Proclamation – Hard Rock Equipment dba Hard Rock Outdoor

Mr. Lawson said this proclamation is to recognize Hard Rock Outdoor as a new business in Town.

b. Resolution 01-2023 – Terrace Park Alley

Mr. Lawson said this resolution will declare the alley next to Terrace Park to be abandoned. This process will help us resolve some other requests from homeowners who have undeveloped alleys next to their property.

c. Ordinance 02-2023 – Revision of Peddlers License

Mr. Lawson said this ordinance is to revise the regulations to do away with a background check for vendors who set up in Town. Ked Meade said this revision will help to draw vendors into Town for events.

d. Britalians TV

While waiting for the team from Britalians TV to join the meeting, Mr. Lawson proceeded with his Projects Update.

Mr. Lawson said the Britalians TV team had intended to spend a couple of days in Big Stone Gap and ended up staying five days visiting businesses and the area. He introduced Marco Biagioli and Erica Merlargo to everyone present and asked them to proceed.

Marco said they were still in Virginia, which has turned out to be the best state to visit so far. He said they are seeking an open collaboration with one of the towns they have visited in Virginia and hope that town will be Big Stone Gap. He said they have felt a lot of warmth and love from the hosts.

Their program they want to launch will consist of a sister partnership with a town in the United Kingdom or Italy. The partnership will focus on opening businesses, promoting tourism, and increasing the residency of both towns.

He said the towns will develop a life-size in-person game with points for dollars spent in town. There will be a large prize for the ultimate winner. The game will be copyrighted and licensed. He said they will visit the town chosen to participate at least four more times to shoot more videos.

Marco and Erica emphasized that the town chosen to participate will have the benefit of providing incentives for people to relocate to there.

e. Projects Update

Water Leaks

Mr. Lawson said our crews have been working steadily on leaks since the big freeze. He said they have had over 25 leaks on lines ranging from 2" to main lines, and over 70 meters they had to repair. He noted there are four crews out now with four separate leaks.

Town Events/Projects

Mr. Lawson said New Year's celebrations in Town was more packed than he has ever seen it, with the restaurants having a pretty good night.

He said that Freedom Chevrolet has designated the money from the Jordan Barnette Bash to improve the stage in Miners Park. He said he and Ked have been talking about doing some improvements to the lighting and sound but he cautioned it will be an ongoing project that develops in stages. He noted that our crews laid some brick in the sidewalk alongside the park as well as inside the park, making it easier to walk around. He said they want to put some type of fencing beside the alleyway, take a few trees out, put a new mural up on the walls of an adjacent building, and do a whole new landscape.

Mr. Lawson said he would like to create a Public Art Committee to help with decision-making for the murals and other art displays throughout Town.

He said he would like to have a "ball drop" on New Year's Eve in Miners Park. He said we could use the pole to fly a big flag during the year.

Mr. Lawson said we have extended the time to enroll in Youth Basketball to try to gain more participation.

Fire in Town

Mr. Lawson said he talked to Ed Wampler today and the fire on Wyandotte Avenue was a total loss of the building. He said the Fire Department is letting tenants go in and salvage anything they can, then the owner will rebuild.

Town Email

Mr. Lawson asked Council members to check with Amanda Hawkins to make sure their emails are correct and working. He noted Ked is going to update the Town municipal website (bigstonegap.org) with the most current information available.

Greenbelt-In-Lights

Mr. Lawson asked Ked to give an update on the Greenbelt-In-Lights rides the last weekend of December. Ked said the fire on Wyandotte Avenue caused us to reroute the rides. He noted we had to cancel rides the week of Christmas – which would have been our biggest weekend - because of the cold weather.

Overall, we provided over a 1,000 individual rides for an estimated 1,300-1,400 people. We had 123 displays, with an additional 17 by Parks & Recreation, and 50 houses along the route were decorated as well. He said we already have requests for spots for next year's event.

He said Kilbourne Studios did over 150 photos with Santa, and the Christmas Market was a huge success as well..

Vice-Mayor Bailey said she was at the Visitor Center waiting on a Greenbelt ride when the fire started and it didn't take 15 minutes for the crew to get a new route for the vehicles and everyone on their way around the Greenbelt.

Blue Highway Fest

Mr. Lawson said the Blue Highway Fest will be on October 11-14, 2023. He said October 11th will be a song-writing event and the 12th will have music downtown.

**AGENDA ITEM 5
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

**AGENDA ITEM 6
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Councilman Bloomer said he was downtown on New Year's Eve and all the restaurants were packed.

Councilman Hughes said he would like to volunteer to serve on the Public Art Committee. He said he thinks the "ball drop" idea will be wildly popular. He gave a special thank you to the Fire Department and the Public Works Department for the overtime worked. He said James Palmer's book on the history of the Fire Department is great and he highly recommends it.

Councilwoman Lyke thanked the Public Works crews for the really long hours they have put in recently with all the water leaks. She said the Fire Department did a great job getting the fire under control quickly and everyone worked well together.

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone for checking on him and Kathy while they've been sick. He thanked Council for working together during 2022 and expects it to be even better in 2023 as we continue to grow.

Vice-Mayor Bailey said she was impressed with all the cars downtown on New Year's Eve and the restaurants that were open and doing well. She said we need to build on that and the "ball drop" is a good idea.

Mr. Lawson added a couple of comments - said he and John Broskey have been working on mapping of Big Cherry for the Amler Grant, he will be in Richmond at the end of January for a meeting on DORA, and the swag is in and we are just waiting on hats.

At this time the team from Britilians TV joined the meeting via Zoom. (see Town Manager's Report Item 4d.)

**AGENDA ITEM 7
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:05 pm.

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