

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

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

July 12, 2022

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. 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
 Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Mayor Gary Johnson.

AGENDA ITEM 3

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of July 12, 2022 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

No comments.

AGENDA ITEM 6**GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop of June 7, 2022.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting of June 14, 2022.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of June 2022.**
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, Lyke, McKinney
Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 7**PHIL RAMSEY – BSG GOLF PUTT-PUTT**

Philip Ramsey, owner of BSG Golf, mentioned several things he would like to see improved near his business.

He said the crosswalk on Wood Avenue that leads to Frog Level Park near his business needs better signage and the lines on the street need to be restriped. He said speeding is a real problem, mostly on weekends when supped-up trucks with loud exhausts speed up to 55 mph in the ¼ mile between the car wash and Town limits. He asked if the speed limit could be reduced to 25 mph and police officers be posted in the area for speed enforcement. He said he is speaking on behalf of concerned citizens who want to cross the street safely.

He thanked Council for letting him speak this evening.

Councilman Bloomer agreed that the entire area from the 4-lane to Town limits should have a reduced speed limit because of traffic congestion.

AGENDA ITEM 8**TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT****Big Cherry Trails**

Mr. Broskey said we have finished plans for the Big Cherry Trails Project and submitted it to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for their approval. If the plans are approved we may be able to advertise the project next month.

Greenbelt Phase V

Mr. Broskey said the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has requested an additional environmental submission because of timing issues, which he assured Council was standard procedure. He said we are waiting for a response regarding our application for additional funds before we can proceed.

Mr. Lawson added that VDOT has just offered an additional \$204,000 for this project, which means that as soon as the environmental submission is approved we can move forward with this project.

Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study

Mr. Broskey said we submitted a grant application to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) for a \$2.9 million project that includes sewer system I & I renovations. We received an offer of a 75% grant and 25% loan, at 0% interest for 30 years, which is an outstanding offer considering we were hoping for a 50/50 loan at best.

He said it is grant submission season at the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) so we will make a couple of applications to them. The first will be for improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The second is for upgrades to the Cadet/Italy Bottom area which is estimated at around \$11 million. He said DEQ recommended that the Town submit a request for the entire \$11 million project and hope for a similar funding offer of 75% grant/25% loan for that project.

AGENDA ITEM 9

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Proclamation – This & That Bakery

Mr. Lawson presented to Council for their approval a proclamation recognizing Tracy Holcomb for expanding her business to include the new This & That Bakery.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bailey, that Council approve a proclamation recognizing Tracy Holcomb, owner of This & That, and the expansion of her business to include This & That Bakery located at 309 Wood Avenue East. Motion resulted as follows:

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

b. Proclamation – Tommy Emmanuel Key to the Town

Mr. Lawson presented to Council for their approval a proclamation honoring Tommy Emmanuel for his musical talent and welcoming him to the Town of Big Stone Gap for a concert at MECC Goodloe Center and presenting him with a Key to the Town. He commented that the Blue Highway Fest organizers requested this proclamation. He suggested Council discuss the issue before they vote on it.

Councilman Hughes suggested they table the issue in light of how many residents of Big Stone Gap have made great contributions to the Town. Everyone agreed the request needs more conversation and consideration before action is taken.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council TABLE THE APPROVAL of a proclamation honoring Tommy Emmanuel for his musical talent and welcoming him to the Town of Big Stone Gap for a concert at MECC Goodloe Center and presenting him with a Key to the Town. Motion resulted as follows:

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

c. Proclamation – Good Times Coal Fired Pizza

Mr. Lawson presented to Council for their approval a proclamation welcoming Good Times Coal Fired Pizza as a new business in Town.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve a proclamation recognizing Jennifer Jones, owner of Good Times Coal Fired Pizza, located at 215 Wood Avenue East. Motion resulted as follows:

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

d. Resolution 11-2022 – Reappointing John Morrissey to the BSG Redevelopment & Housing Authority

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve this resolution to reappoint John Morrissey to the BSG Housing Authority Board for a four-year term ending June 30, 2026.

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve Resolution 11-2022 being a resolution re-appointing John Morrissey to the Big Stone Gap Redevelopment and Housing Authority Board of Commissioners of a term of four years to expire on June 30, 2026. Motion resulted as follows:

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

e. Projects Update

Greenbelt Trail Project

Mr. Lawson said the current phase of the Greenbelt Trail Project to build the bridge across the Powell River is back on track and will go out to bid soon. He said the next two phases are the River Bend phase and the Appalachia Connection phase. On the River Bend phase Mr. Lawson said he just sent an invitation to a zoom meeting next week. He said we have moved thru the next stage of pre-qualifying for the Appalachia Connection phase.

Police Department

Mr. Lawson said with the new budget going in to effect July 1st, we have hired two certified police officers from another locality. He said they are doing physicals today and will do the firearms testing this week. One of the officers is a certified firearms officer so he will assume that role for us. We have two more applicants who are in the process of serving out their notice with their current jobs. He said we are negotiating with another officer who will fill the position with the Drug Task Force. He said the Police Department is looking better.

Chief Hamm thanked Council for allowing competitive wages for his officers to support recruitment.

4th of July

Mr. Lawson said the 4th of July activities went well with only one police-involved incident involving a citizen in the free zone who was caught urinating on the concession stand wall because he said he couldn't find the restrooms. He said we did have some complaints from the general public about having to pay to access the food court area but he said he doesn't see any reason to change that rule.

He said the Blue Highway Band and festival organizer Larry Roberts were at the festivities and were pleased with the event. Mr. Lawson estimated that around 5,500-6,000 people were in attendance. He said he didn't think the front of the football field was as crowded as prior years but that may be because we moved the stage back a bit this year.

As for attendance, he said there were approximately 900-1,500 people in the free area. At the gates, we sold 4,470 wristbands to allow access to the grounds. Gate sales totaled \$9,550 in cash with an additional \$5,700 in cash taken in at the beer garden. Those totals do not include the credit card sales. He noted that according to Eventbrite there were 182 tickets sold in Kingsport.

He said we had one complaint on facebook from a vendor who didn't arrive on time and had to carry his food into the food court rather than drive his vehicle in. He said that vendor gave us a list of 20 people who were supposed to work at the truck so he should have had plenty of help carrying in supplies.

He said the inflatables were enjoyed by the kids with no incidents. He said we had a longer fireworks show than in the past, and are looking to get training on using an electrical board to shoot and sync the fireworks in the future.

Mayor Johnson commented that a citizen noted that early the next morning there wasn't a scrap of trash in the park. Mr. Lawson said he couldn't say enough about our employees and the work they put in the week leading up to the event as well as on the Fourth.

Weather

Mr. Lawson said the recent heavy rains caused problems with a couple of new businesses. There was water running into Curklin's basement and Good Times had some issues as well. He said there was a lot of water running down the road toward Heritage Hall. He noted that the WWTP was running at full capacity to keep up with the flow. He commented that while a rain event like this is occurring it is impossible to go out and work on pipes – that type of work has to wait until the water recedes.

Pump Track

Mr. Lawson said there is a Pump Track meeting on Friday at 2:30 pm at the old Terrace Park Cabin. He said an engineer is coming to look at the site and discuss plans.

Paving

Mr. Lawson said the paving company that had the lowest bid is in the process of getting their business license so work can begin.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

Mr. Lawson indicated the report in Council's packets from Gary Hampton about a new study from the CDC that chose us to participate by collecting data related to the COVID-19 virus. He said he will have more information about this soon.

**AGENDA ITEM 10
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a. Planning Commission**
No report.

**AGENDA ITEM 11
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Councilman McKinney thanked all Town employees for a great job on the 4th of July festivities.

Councilwoman Lyke echoed the thanks to employees. She asked if we have any data on ticket sales for the Blue Highway Fest. Mr. Lawson said the organizers are not releasing any information at this time but they will update us before the event. He thanked Freedom Chevrolet for the \$15,000 check they gave to the Town for renovations to the stage at Miners Park from the proceeds of the Jordan Barnette Birthday Bash. He said this going to be a really good partnership. He thanked Crystal for getting us trucks from Freedom for the 4th of July parade. Ms. Lyke said the Jordan Barnette event is near and dear to her heart and thanked all the businesses that pitched in and helped. She thanked the Town for the Jordan Barnette Boulevard street sign behind Freedom Chevrolet, adding it meant a lot to the family.

Councilman Hughes thanked the employees who were involved in the Fourth activities. He said the new sidewalk at Miners Park looks great. He said he received a lot of calls the last few weeks about safety on the Greenbelt, particularly the erratic behavior of some people roaming the area who appear to be staying on the Greenbelt 24/7. He asked if there is an update about the traffic light on Country Boy Hill. Mr. Lawson said we have been told this week that they will be here next week, but added we have been told that every week for the last three weeks. He also asked Chief Hamm what can be done about people sleeping on the Greenbelt and in front of the Visitor Center. Chief Hamm said there is nothing restricting access to public property. Mr. Lawson said in the next budget we may need to look at a position for a street officer who would walk the streets and/or ride a bicycle on the Greenbelt.

Councilman Gilley said the 4th of July festivities were wonderful and thanked the employees. He said the Planning Commission did not have a quorum last night but will meet next week. Mr. Lawson mentioned that the Planning Commission might consider discussing problems the Town is having on several issues, such as junk yards, disabled vehicles sitting in yards, trucks parked in front of houses, etc. Mr. Gilley asked about the cabin site being the new pump track site. Mr. Lawson said it will work better as a pump track than a third softball field for several reasons, a major one being sufficient parking. He thinks putting a third field at Frog Level will work out much better.

Councilman Bloomer expressed thanks to employees and congrats to the Police Department. He said he also has had complaints about questionable people on the Greenbelt. He said the Café is having music every Saturday night and is getting a lot of people walking over from Curklin's and other businesses.

Vice-Mayor Bailey thanked all the employees for a great Fourth. She said that Ked Meade commented that for every ticket sold on Eventbrite we sold four at the gate.

Mayor Johnson said it is good news about the Police Department hiring new officers. He said our Town crews do a good. He said the chainsaw carver who made bears for local folks said he loves Big Stone Gap and enjoys spending time at Jessie Lea RV Park.

**AGENDA ITEM 12
ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Hughes, 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 7:32 pm.

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