

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

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

September 6, 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 Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
 Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney
 Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

AGENDA ITEM 2

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of August 2, 2022, and the Regular Council Meeting of August 9, 2022.

AGENDA ITEM 3

TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

In John Broskey's absence, Mr. Lawson reported that a Pre-Bid meeting was held on August 31st for the Greenbelt Phase V Project. There were eight contractors present, all of whom are well known to the Town. He noted there is a 180 day window in which to issue a Notice to Proceed.

Mr. Lawson said that among the contractors present there was a bridge fabricator who was of the opinion that if we had put out an order on August 31st for the bridge it would not be ready for placement until March 2023, which is around 180 days. If that is correct, we are looking at around a year before the bridge is completed.

Mr. Lawson said the bid opening will be held on September 13th at 2 pm at which time we will know if we have enough money to move forward.

Big Cherry Trails

Mr. Lawson said the Pre-Bid meeting for the Big Cherry Straight Fork Ridge Trail was held on August 31st, with the bid opening scheduled for September 13th at 3 pm. He remarked that this is an easier project to get done. He said the trail begins on the right-hand side of the boat ramp and goes a little over a mile up the mountain to connect with the Devils Fork Loop. He said they have marked the trail in orange so anyone can follow it if Council wants to take a look at it.

AGENDA ITEM 4

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Resolution 13-2022 – Section 125 Plan

Mr. Lawson said this resolution is to adopt the Section 125 Cafeteria Premium Only Plan for the plan year ending June 30, 2023.

b. Proclamation – Big Cherry Brewing Company

Mr. Lawson said this proclamation is to recognize Josh Callahan, owner of Big Cherry Brewing Company, located at 402 Wood Avenue East. He said a grand opening/ribbon-cutting ceremony does not have a firm date yet, but as soon as we have a date from the owner we will notify everyone.

c. Projects Update

Website Demonstration

Mr. Lawson said the Friends of Southwest Virginia held the inaugural Southwest Virginia Tourism Awards in August. The Big Stone Gap Visitor Center won Best Rack Card or Brochure, Outstanding Visitor Center of the Year, and Outstanding Visitor Center Employee of the Year–Joey O'Quinn.

Mr. Lawson asked Tourism and Economic Development Director Ked Meade to give Council a demonstration of how to easily access our websites.

Ked Meade walked thru the different websites the Town has demonstrating how to use each one:

bigstonegap.org - official information and forms available to print

Council Reports

Code of the Town of Big Stone Gap

bigstonegap.com - calendar with upcoming events in Town and the surrounding region
links to local attractions and businesses

Early Voting

Mr. Lawson said that early voting for all Wise County residents (with the exception of City of Norton residents) will be available to the public from October 11th thru November 5th at Carnes Gym. He said we will have the hours of operation next week for the early voting.

Paymerang

Mr. Lawson said we assisted in the unveiling of Paymerang, a business that will bring in about 20 jobs to the area with the possibility of up to 50 jobs over time. We are helping them get

established in the Co-Work Space in the lower level of Curklin's. We are getting quotes for a key fob to allow them to enter from the street.

Auditors

Mr. Lawson said the pre-auditors were here today to get started on our annual audit. He said Ms. Hawkins and her team had everything ready for them that they will need today. They spent today in our office and will do the remainder of the work at their offices in Abingdon.

Water Leak

Mr. Lawson said there was a leak at the Union Primary School this weekend. He said the leak was in the original pipe and under concrete and asphalt. He said we will add this line to our future repair schedule.

Daytime Tri-Cities

Mr. Lawson said we did another spot on Daytime Tri-Cities promoting the Blue Highway Festival as well as the Town. This was set up by the Heart of Appalachia. He noted that Ked Meade is now on several tourism boards throughout the area and is working hard to promote the Town.

Steak Cook-Off

Mr. Lawson said we have 12 teams signed up with 10 judges lined up for the Steak Cook-Off. He said he has been told it is not uncommon for 10-12 teams to set up the week of the event so we should have a good turn-out. He said the Woodcarvers have the carved trophies and they are ready for the winners. Music will begin at 12 noon and the first Grizzly team will start at 2:00 pm.

Football Fridays

Mr. Lawson said the wrap for the locker room should be installed Thursday or Friday inside the locker room and the outside will depend on the weather. He said Coach Turner and the UHS staff indicated they are very pleased with the renovation. Mr. Lawson said there is a slight echo in the building and asked Allan Maggard to check it out to see if the sound can be dampened. He said they still need benches and need to paint the fieldhouse and the ticket booth.

MECC Foundation

Mr. Lawson said the MECC foundation gave their Haunted Forest props to the Town to set up on our property. He said we don't have time to set it up this year but we will certainly work on it for next year and are very grateful to the foundation for giving us the props.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports.

AGENDA ITEM 6

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Hughes sent congrats to the tourism team for winning the awards. He noted that all the archives of Maggard Studio have been donated to ETSU and the Birthplace of Country

Music so all the early recordings in the area will be preserved. He mentioned that Helen Lewis passed away – she was instrumental in creating a lot of positive change in Southwest Virginia such as helping organize the first library system and was a strong proponent of the Coal Severance Tax that has assisted a lot of localities.

Councilman McKinney said the storms that came thru a few nights ago blew over a tree on his property. He cut it up and requested a work order for the Streets Crew to pick it up. He said they did a great job – he didn't have a twig left in his yard when they left.

Vice-Mayor Bailey thanked Ked Meade for all the hard work he has put in and the awards the Town won.

Mayor Johnson thanked Ked for working hard behind the scenes to get things done. He also thanked the Police Department, Parks & Rec, and the Water Crews.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:10 pm.

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