

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

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

**November 1, 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 \*arrived at 6:36 pm  
                              Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

Staff Present:         Mr. Stephen Lawson, Town Manager  
                              Ms. Amanda Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer  
                              Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney  
                              Lt. Eddie Phillips, Police Department

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

**Review of draft of minutes of the Regular Council Meeting of October 11, 2022.**

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT**

**Big Cherry Walking Trails**

Mr. Broskey said we have received the contracts and bonds from Boyd's Construction for the Big Cherry Straight Fork Ridge Trail. The documents have been reviewed and approved by Mr. Bledsoe so we will set up a pre-construction meeting to finalize the details necessary to get this project under way.

**Greenbelt Phase V**

Mr. Broskey said they are waiting on the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to make the funding transfers we discussed last month. Mr. Lawson said he signed the contract to make the transfers so we can begin moving forward.

## **System Wide Water Loss Project**

Mr. Broskey said we submitted plans to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) which came back with no comments. He said we will advertise for bids in the Spring as most contractors seem to be swamped right now.

## **AGENDA ITEM 4**

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

#### **a. Proclamation – Three Forks Sandwich Company**

Mr. Lawson presented this proclamation to Council to recognize Three Forks Sandwich Company as a new business in Town.

#### **b. Parade Permit – Christmas Parade**

Mr. Lawson presented this permit to Council to authorize our annual Christmas Parade on December 1<sup>st</sup> sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department.

#### **c. Projects Update**

Before beginning his report, Mr. Lawson recognized a group of citizens who wanted to speak to Council about some concerns regarding property in Town.

J. H. Rivers said he and Betty Cornett own property at 403 Shawnee Avenue West where the neighbor next door has allowed his property to be overrun with an abundance of vehicles and debris, some of which are on Town right-of-way. He, and other citizens with him tonight, are asking the Town to amend the personal property ordinance to prohibit property owners from making their property a junk yard and to designate an area for junk yards away from residential areas. He said they believe the junk yard to be a health hazard as well as to have environmental issues. In addition, they believe it devalues all the adjoining properties. He asked that we do something that is beneficial to the Town and all the residents in that area and take action on this issue.

Mr. Lawson responded that the Town is researching ordinances and regulations to see the best way to address this issue. He said we have to find a way to ensure we can enforce whatever regulations we set up, but he assured Mr. Rivers and the group of citizens who accompanied him this evening that we are taking the issue very seriously and are moving toward a solution.

### **Donation Requests**

Mr. Lawson said that last year we gave \$250 to the Wise County Social Services Adult Services Program. He asked if Council was agreeable to giving that amount this year. Everyone agreed.

Mr. Lawson said that in prior years we gave the Wise County Social Services Foster Kids Program \$250 but last year increased that donation to \$1,050 because of a special request. He asked if Council wanted to repeat the amount from last year or revert to the prior amount. Mayor Johnson suggested we keep the amount at \$1,050 and the rest of Council agreed.

### **New Business**

Mr. Lawson said Food City has opened a Starbucks inside their store in Town. They will have a Grand Opening on Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 am. He noted they are trying to have the biggest grand opening of Starbucks of all the Food City stores and encouraged everyone to attend.

### **Car Charging Stations**

Mr. Lawson said that we are looking at installing charging stations for electronic vehicles in the parking lot behind the Post Office. Freedom Chevrolet has informed us that the Chevrolet corporation will give us the chargers if we agree to install the pedestals they attach to. The cost of installation will be about \$7,100. We are looking into programs to assist with the cost. He noted there is already electricity in the parking lot next to 404 Café and we could get a charger into that space. He also mentioned that before this opportunity came up we had obtained two chargers to install in the third lane at the Municipal Building. The cost to run electricity to that lane was \$3,100 so he said we will probably complete that station at our expense to get those installed.

### **Book about BSG Fire Department**

Mr. Lawson said James Palmer, former Fire Department firefighter, has written a book about the history of Big Stone Gap and its Fire Department called Guardians in the Gap. Billy Chandler has asked the Town to buy 100 books with the proceeds to go to the Fire Department. Council agreed to buy 25 books at this time.

### **Knox Boxes**

Mr. Lawson said a Knox Box is a device that enables the Fire Department to gain entrance to a building with a key, therefore making it unnecessary for the Fire Department to knock down a door during a fire. When the Mutual Building was being renovated, the Big Stone Gap Housing Authority installed three Knox Boxes – one for each level. It is now up to us to the corresponding devices that hold the master keys in three fire vehicles. The cost is estimated at \$3,400.

### **Blue Highway Fest**

Mr. Lawson said we keep running into problems with setting a date for next year's festival. The School Board was not unanimous on the agreement to move the football game scheduled for that weekend, so we had to look at other dates. He said we have settled on August 3-5, 2023. This date worked best for many of the bluegrass groups we want to come back. He commented that we are working on a new lineup for next year to draw more young people. He said he will meet with the restaurants also to get some ideas on how they can draw people to their businesses during that weekend.

### **Upcoming Events**

Mr. Lawson said the Wise Jams will be performing on Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, at 5 pm at the Southwest Virginia Museum.

He said the Town will hold its annual Veteran's Parade downtown on Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, at 11:30 am.

The Southwest Virginia Museum will hold a tree-lighting ceremony and reception for their annual Festival of Trees on Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, from 6-8 pm.

He said Parks and Rec will hold their annual Holiday Craft Fair on Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, from 9-5 pm and Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, from 1-5 pm.

He said the Employee's Thanksgiving Lunch will be in the gym on Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, at noon. All Council members are invited.

The Southwest Virginia Children's Advocacy Center Gala will be on November 12<sup>th</sup> at the Lonesome Pine Country Club. The theme is "A Night in Old Hollywood". Susie Evans, a former Ms. Virginia USA and a reality TV personality, will be hostess for the event. The Town has bought one table with six seats that is already booked up with Stephen and Tiffany, Ked and Miranda, and

Nancy and David. Nancy said she will probably not be able to attend because David will be Santa at the Museum's tree-lighting ceremony on that same night. Mr. Lawson said if anyone else wishes to attend to let him know.

He said that Moon Dog will have a soft opening on Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30. They asked the Town to bring 40 people. He noted that this is the same day that Starbucks is having their grand opening at 9:30 am, and the Union High School has invited Council to attend their grand opening of their Wrestling Building at noon.

### **Garbage Truck**

Mr. Lawson said the sanitation crew has had to use a garbage truck and backhoe to pick up garbage because the key to our backup garbage truck has been lost. Quality Garbage has a good quality used truck they have decided to sale for a very good price that we have purchased.

### **Britilinas TV**

Mr. Lawson said we got a call out of the blue from a group from the United Kingdom called Britilinas TV who produces a special called "Humans of the World". Apparently they saw the video that Henry Keuling-Stout did at Big Cherry. They came to do some shots in Northern Virginia, and someone directed them to us to do something to celebrate history, culture, and redevelopment in our region. He said that after production, our only cost would be for marketing at around \$2,400, which is a good deal for that kind of exposure. He said the video would be aired on Amazon Prime. He noted we are still in negotiations.

### **Harvest Host**

Mr. Lawson said there is an RV Camper Program in which RV's visit wineries, breweries, and stores, He said they ask for one night of guaranteed parking then they will be on their own to find another location to park. He said we can refer them to Jessie Lea RV Park & Campground.

### **Local Pastor**

Mr. Lawson mentioned that Ronnie Mutter passed away this week. He said he was a great community guy who always worked with us.

### **AMLER Grant**

Mr. Lawson said we finally received the numbers (\$2,000,000) for the AMLER Grant that will fund projects at Big Cherry, High Knob, and Devil's Bathtub.

### **MECC Amphitheater Project**

Mr. Lawson said he and Tyler Hughes attended one of the most productive meetings he has been in where everyone was engaged and enthusiastic about this project. They have a company that provided plans who seemed very knowledgeable about what they were doing.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

**AGENDA ITEM 6  
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Councilman Bloomer said Halloween was a great success. He thanked everyone who made it a safe event for the kids. He mentioned that, contrary to rumor, he is not in support of the “junk yard” on Shawnee Avenue West.

Councilman Hughes thanked Town crews and especially the Police Department for their assistance with Halloween. He said he volunteered at the museum where over a thousand people came thru. He said the idea for the proposed amphitheater began many years ago after the passing of Sue Ella Boatright-Wells to expand the offerings of performance arts at Mountain Empire Community College. The amphitheater will follow the natural curves of the landscape outside the Goodloe Center.

Councilwoman Lyke said she had over 400 kids at her house last night. Karen Buell, who manages Walmart in Lee County, has suggested a monopoly game based on Big Stone Gap and Appalachia. She mentioned that Lee County already has a similar one.

Vice-Mayor Bailey also thanked the Police Department and all the staff for a great Halloween. She said there were a lot of treaters out and about.

Councilman Hughes wished Happy Birthday to Mayor Gary Johnson.

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone and said Halloween was a great success and he is glad all went well.

**AGENDA ITEM 7  
ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned 7:26 pm.**

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