

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

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

December 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. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman *Arrived at 6:38 pm
 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

Those Absent: Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman

AGENDA ITEM 2

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of November 1, 2022, and the Regular Council Meeting of November 8, 2022.

AGENDA ITEM 3

TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

John Broskey said we received authorization to award the bid for the Greenbelt Phase V Project, and that bid was awarded last week to King Contractors. The contractor is working on the documents and bonds to get them to us this week for Charles Bledsoe to review.

Future Projects

Mr. Broskey said they have been working with Lenowisco on some possible Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) projects. East Stone Gap, Italy Bottom, and Beamantown are the primary locations we are looking at for possible improvements to the water and sewer lines. He said they distributed income surveys throughout the East Stone Gap area because the median income will help determine our eligibility for some programs. He said they have received 17 responses so far, with 15 of those falling under moderate income.

Mayor Johnson asked if the proposed project would increase the main water line size. Mr. Broskey said that it would probably increase the main line size from 2-inch or 4-inch lines to a six-inch line. Mr. Lawson asked if we could reach out to the Dalton-Cantrell Community Center to spread word of how important it is to complete the surveys and suggested they try different approaches to inform the community of what we are trying to accomplish.

AGENDA ITEM 4

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Proclamation – Ride Rental LLC

Mr. Lawson said this proclamation is to recognize Ride Rental LLC as a new business in Town owned by Stacy Doyle.

b. Proclamation – Kerigan's Bridal and Formal Shop

Mr. Lawson said this proclamation is to recognize Kerigan's Bridal and Formal Shop as a new business in Town.

c. Abandon Alleyway on Terrace Avenue

Mr. Lawson said this resolution is to abandon an alley on Terrace Avenue that is a part of the property we transferred to the Southwest Virginia Museum. He said we passed an ordinance to transfer this property but no mention was made about the alley. The latest word is that the ordinance may suffice, and this resolution may not be needed after all. He said he will keep Council updated.

d. Resolution – ARPA Stipend

Mr. Lawson said this stipend from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was paid to employees last week.

e. Maintenance

Mr. Lawson said Veolia has offered us a five-year maintenance program on our water tanks for \$350,000 per year. We have an option of a ten-year contract at \$250,000 per year. He said the Downtown West, Downtown East, and Country Club Tanks are in very bad shape, and we need to do rehab/maintenance on those in years 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. He said the best thing is to use \$1.2 million of the ARPA funds to fix those five tanks, including the Clearwell Tank going up to Big Cherry. He said we would like to put the newly designed logo for Big Cherry Lake on the Clearwell Tank. He would like to put the Town logo on the Downtown Tank (near the cross) as well.

Mr. Lawson noted the five-year option will put us under an obligation to pay \$350,000 per year for five years. He said that while we are receiving ARPA funds this is not a huge problem, but after ARPA funds are no longer coming in the burden of that expense will fall onto the Town. The same goes for the ten-year plan – the cost would take nearly all of our Improvement Fee funds on our monthly water bills to pay out the \$250,000 each year.

Mr. Lawson said his recommendation is to use the ARPA funds to get the tanks fixed that are in the worst shape in year one, set our own maintenance schedule for the remaining tanks in the system, and make repairs to those remaining tanks as need arises.

f. Projects Update

Water Withdrawal Permit

Mr. Lawson said the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) updated our Water Withdrawal Permit last year for a huge fee. Today they hinted at what that permit will look like. He said the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) produces 4 million gallons of water per day. DEQ is trying to cut the permit back to 2.6 million gallons per day for withdrawal, based on a prior output of 1.8 million gallons per day. Mr. Lawson said that is not an accurate figure of what our WTP produces and we will fight back hard on their plan. He said we supply Norton water from time to time, and Lee County counts on us to supply water for the whole east side of the county. He said DEQ is blaming the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) for keeping fisheries with enough water in creeks and rivers – their solution is to increase the flow of water going by the plant, rather than into the plant, by 40%. He said we have a lot of projects and things coming up that will require additional water output that DEQ is not taking into consideration. He will keep Council updated as things progress.

Ride-Share Transport

Mr. Lawson said he plans to talk to Gap Partnership and the car dealers in town to discuss a ride-share transport or uber/taxi service to get more people in and out of town. He said there is a real need for this.

Police Department Vests

Mr. Lawson said we have obtained a grant for new vests for the Police Department in the amount of \$5,070. Our share of the costs will be \$5,014. He said the Police Department also ordered new Battle Dress Uniforms (BDU's) and are waiting on patches to be put on.

Holiday Events

Mr. Lawson said we took out a one-page ad for our Holiday events in December including the Greenbelt-in-Lights.

He said the Christmas Parade was a success. He mentioned one item that needs to be addressed is the candy thrown out into the road – we picked up a lot of candy after the parade but more serious is the issue of kids walking out in the road to pick up candy while vehicles are moving.

He said the Craft Show on Dec 3-4 in Carnes Gym didn't have a lot of people in attendance.

Mr. Lawson said the Southwest Virginia Museum will have their Festival of Trees thru December 31st.

He said the Christmas Market will be on the 10th and 17th, from 6-9 pm at the Visitor Center. Photos with Santa will be available on those nights as well.

He said the Town's website has list of everywhere you can eat or shop in Big Stone Gap and the surrounding areas.

On Thursday, December 8th, the Visitor Center will host a painting event for Council and staff members wishing to participate in partnership with The Pottery Shop.

He said Moon Dog called today asking to have a ribbon-cutting ceremony this Friday at 10:30 am.

Mr. Lawson reminded Council that the Employee Christmas Lunch will be on December 15th at noon at Town Hall. All Council members are invited.

He said several people attended the John H. Cubine Memorial Bridge dedication last Friday to pay respects to Johnny.

Enterprise Business Loan – Four Seasons

Mr. Lawson said the Town gave an Enterprise Business Loan to Four Seasons for \$35,000 on November 1, 2017 and placed a lien on the property as a second deed of trust. The owners of Four Seasons have asked us to release that lien in exchange for a check for \$10,000. They owe \$19,812 at this time, and want us to forgive the remainder of the balance. They said they want to refinance and consolidate all debt into one loan. They need the lien released in order to be approved for the consolidation by the lender. Mr. Lawson said the Town has shown a lot of consideration to them over the last five years and he does not recommend that we do this. Council agreed that the lien would not be forgiven for the \$10,000 payment.

Police Department

Mr. Lawson said an isolated incident of violence recently was resolved and is in the hands of the courts now. He commended our Police Officers and Investigators for the great work they did in resolving the issue in an efficient and professional manner.

He noted that an East Stone Gap shooting was blown out of proportion when it turned out to be an accidental shooting.

Planning Commission

Mr. Lawson said there is a vacancy on the Planning Commission due to the resignation of Charlie Beverly. He said Nancy spoke with Mark Lester and he expressed interest in serving on the Commission again. He was a former member of the Commission but stepped down because his work schedule took him out of town on meeting nights, but he is free now and would like to resume his position.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports.

AGENDA ITEM 6

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman McKinney said the Christmas Parade had a good turnout - the candy was a bit excessive – but everyone had a good time.

Councilman Gilley said he gets asked a lot about the lights at Fraley Park. He said he doesn't know if the lights are out or we need to add more because some people like to walk there in the evenings.

Councilman Bloomer said he was not aware of the problem with throwing candy out of a vehicle but said he will be more cautious in the future.

Councilwoman Lyke said it was very difficult to hear the announcements from the stage in Miners Park during the Christmas Parade.

Vice-Mayor Bailey agreed we needed to work on a solution for the candy issue at the Christmas Parade but said overall the parade was great. She thanked the Police Department for handling the situation last week so well.

Mayor Johnson said the Christmas Parade was great but for him the highlight of the season is the Greenbelt-In-Lights. He said people love it. He thanked the Parks and Recreation Department for working so hard to keep the lights going during rough weather.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:05 pm.

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