

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

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

May 02, 2023

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. Robert Bloomer, Councilman
 Hon. Kent Gilley, Councilman
 Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
 Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

Staff Present: Mr. Stephen Lawson, Town Manager
 Ms. Amanda Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
 Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police
 Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

Those Absent: Hon. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor
 Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman

AGENDA ITEM 2

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of April 4, 2023, and the Regular Council Meeting of April 11, 2023.

AGENDA ITEM 3

TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

Mr. Broskey said construction is on-going on the Greenbelt. The second retaining wall is finished and concrete underneath the bridge will be poured this week.

Big Cherry Trails

Mr. Broskey said the Big Cherry Trail project will be finished soon.

System Wide Water Loss Phase 1A, 1B and 2

Mr. Broskey said all engineering documents have been submitted to Rural Development, who is funding the project, with hopes of advertising this summer.

Virginia Department of Health – System Wide Water Loss Phase 3

Mr. Broskey said we received the VDH offer letter for \$5.6 million of the \$7.6 million total project cost. The remaining \$2 million could be offered later. It is unknown at this point if that future offer will be all loan or a grant/loan mix. The annual payment on the \$1.8 million loan portion of the offer is expected to be \$63,325. There is an estimated annual gain of \$110,000 in water loss savings once this project is done. VDH will need a decision on the \$5.6 million offer by May 12th.

East Stone Gap Comprehensive Water/Sewer Improvements

Mr. Broskey said the scope of the water/sewer project has been minimized due to changing guidelines over the past month. We are applying for a \$1.3 million project from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCH). Nine more income surveys are needed for the application.

Mr. Lawson asked about the DEQ offer for the Wastewater Plant Improvement sewer project for a \$2.9 million loan at zero percent. Mr. Broskey stated that by June we should have an offer for any principal forgiveness after which time we can re-evaluate the offer.

Councilman Gilley asked if we need to readvertise the Request for Proposals regarding the update to the comprehensive plan or were the previous numbers still good. Mr. Broskey said he would reach out to the sub-contractor involved with the quote again for an update since the original price was given in 2019 or 2020.

AGENDA ITEM 4**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT****a. Projects Update****Bridge Inspection Reports**

Mr. Lawson said the bridge inspection reports were received and copies sent by certified mail to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). All recommended bridge maintenance can be handled by the Town. However, the Rt. 58 bridge at the bottom of Gilley Avenue will need to be considered for replacement due to traffic flow and narrow lanes. We need to coordinate with VDOT planning and funding that bridge replacement.

Big Cherry Lake - Forestry

Mr. Lawson said he met with John Perry, Virginia Department of Forestry, and Shane Sturgill, Virginia Department of Agriculture, who is also on the Forestry's Fire Division. We discussed camp sites and some future plans to develop more recreation at Big Cherry as well as fire mitigation. We are looking at pushing fire lanes along the property lines to help protect the entire area. We want to have a pattern of controlled burning from the property lines back to the lake and control the vegetation. The deadline for spring approval of the controlled burn has passed, but this fall the plan is to burn the area of the old concrete plant, the dam, and boat ramp at

the lake to clear those sections. The crews burn the same area three years in a row to get the vegetation under control.

Frog Level Park Improvement

Mr. Lawson said we had chain link fencing quoted for the backstops of the baseball/softball field and the small field by the dog park for \$65,000. We have decided to go with telephone poles and netting due to flooding. This setup will allow us to raise the netting when there is a danger of flooding, and the cost will be in the range of \$30,000 to \$35,000 for both fields. We will consider lighting for the park later.

Harvest Host

Mr. Lawson said the Town has had someone come every week to the Harvest Host Camper/RV location. We are looking at placing a 20 ft x 40 ft concrete pad facing the fork of the river to provide a definite place to park the campers. We can provide water and power easily, but the sewer will be more complicated.

Dogwood Garden Club

Mr. Lawson informed the Council of the Dogwood Garden Club's 60th Anniversary celebration on Monday, May 22nd at the Lonesome Pine Country Club at 6 p.m. Anyone wanting to attend is welcome.

National Police Week

Mr. Lawson said that he, Chief Hamm, and Matt Russell will be attending the National Police Week memorial events in Washington D.C. May 12 - May 16, 2023, where Michael Dwayne Chandler will be honored in the 2023 Roll Call of Heroes.

Love Sign

Mr. Lawson said the Love sign at Miners Park is still under discussion and Council will be updated as more details become available.

Virginia Department of Health System Wide Water Loss Phase 3

Mr. Lawson encouraged Council to accept the offer from the Virginia Department of Health to allow the project to move forward. We can explore other options for the remaining cost of \$2 million for the project later or we can change the scope of the project to reduce the size.

Tour de Crackers Neck

Mr. Lawson said the Tour de Crackers Neck bike race will be on Saturday, May 20th. Police presence will be reduced again this year providing an escort to participants in town while other Town staff will guide them through the East Stone Gap turns, to take either the long route or the short route.

David Gibson

Mr. Lawson said David Gibson's funeral arrangements have been finalized and visitation will be on Thursday, May 4, 2023, at Gilliam Funeral Home from 5 – 7 PM.

Frog Level Park Restrooms

Councilman Gilley asked about the restrooms at the Harvest Host location at Frog Level Park where the port-a-potties are being used. Gilley wondered if constructing restrooms would be cost effective.

Councilman Bloomer said he knew of an option for a portable building to be “rolled in” that would cost about \$25,000, but there would be additional cost to set up the facilities. He asked if there is another place to move Harvest Host location.

Mr. Lawson said we would need a place where parking is not an issue and that is not in the flood plain that is owned by the Town to be able to move the Harvest Host location to. Those locations are limited or non-existent.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Kent Gilley, Council Representative for the Planning Commission said they met two weeks ago to review the site plan for the old Honeybee Market, for the new business planning to open there. He said the Planning Commission agrees to the proposal if the Virginia Department of Transportation approves the site plan.

Councilman Gilley stated that Donna Kinsler has asked to convert the old Johnson Hardware building to a daycare. Approval of a Special Use Permit was recommended by the Commission. A Joint Public Hearing needs to be scheduled. Inspection for the daycare will be done by Wise County.

He said that a review of the animal ordinances for bees, dogs, and chickens, etc. is beginning to make changes, if necessary. He said the property maintenance ordinances regarding having multiple abandoned or junk vehicles parked on private property are also being reviewed.

Mr. Lawson stated the Commission needed to consider candidates to fill the vacancy created with the loss of David Gibson.

Mr. Lawson said he was concerned about the recent issues of the Planning Commission having a quorum for their meetings. He asked if the meeting schedule needed to be changed to better accommodate the members. Councilman Gilley responded all is working well but he would ask members of the Planning Commission for their thoughts.

AGENDA ITEM 6

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Hughes agreed with Mr. Lawson that the Town needs to pursue the Phase 3 funding. He said the Public Arts Committee will be meeting in May. He thanked all employees of the Town. He also said there had been complaints about speeding leaving Bullitt Park at the exit near the tennis court end of the park.

Councilman Gilley said Kid’s Fishing Day will be Saturday, May 27th. Mr. Lawson said we are going to clean more areas around the bank of the lake for the event to allow for more fishing spots for the kids.

Mayor Johnson asked if there needed to be another meeting for the Tour de Crackers Neck race, Chief Hamm said if needed to let him know. Mr. Lawson said that everything is planned, and the event should be good. Mayor Johnson commented that the Kids Fishing Day will be a good event for the Town. He thanked all the employees and Council for the work they do.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:28 pm.

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