

TOWN OF BIG STONE GAP, VIRGINIA REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

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

November 14, 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. 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. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police
- Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

Those Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Reverend Sandra Jones of Williams Chapel AME Zion Church.

AGENDA ITEM 3

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Bloomer, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of November 14, 2023 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 5

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Wendy McArtin, 214 East 1st Street South, asked Council if the Gap Partnership could be put on the agenda to report monthly. She also congratulated the newly elected officials and stated that it has been one year since her family moved here and the town does a great job. Ms. McArtin said they love it here.

AGENDA ITEM 6

MIKE ALLEN – BULLITT PARK FIELD

Mike Allen, 103 West 1st Street South, said he was here several years ago and wanted to revisit what Bullitt Park means to the Town and a revitalization of the park was started. Mr. Allen said he was a representative of a great number of residents of Big Stone Gap, of which many are Powell Valley athletic alumni. He respectfully asked Council to support a naming opportunity for Phil Robbins. Mr. Allen said that Mr. Robbins' accomplishments include the following: employed at Powell Valley High School from 1983 – 2010, 7 football state championships, 1 football state runner up, won 2 state titles in boys track, 15 Region D titles, 15 Lonesome Pine District titles, total win career of 310 wins, 260 of those were at Powell Valley. Mr. Robbins has served on the Town council, and now heads up a very successful Backpack Program for the local schools. Mr. Allen said that Mr. Robbins has dedicated most of his professional life to Big Stone Gap and the local high school.

Councilman Bloomer asked Mr. Allen what he and the group of residents would want to name to honor Mr. Robbins? Mr. Allen said he would defer to Council's expertise. Mr. Allen said that the park and stadium already had names; he would recommend the field, streets, or boulevards. Mr. Lawson said the community needs to be precise on what they want, so Council can make this decision. Mr. Lawson said they are researching the history of the field, and wanted to wait till the Council can confirm that history before taking any action. Mayor Johnson asked if there would be a second choice to the field? Mr. Allen said streets or the entrance to Bullitt Park. Mr. Lawson said we would need to look at the county for streets as renaming a street could be a major concern with 911 addresses. He said that Council would check on the history of the field and would get back with Mr. Allen.

AGENDA ITEM 7

GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. **Approval of Regular Council Meeting of October 3, 2023.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. **Departmental Reports for the month of October 2023.**
Recommended Action: Received and filed.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that the General Order of Business be approved as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 8 TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

Mr. Broskey said the bridge for Greenbelt Phase V will be here November 27, 2023. Councilman Bloomer asked how much time to install the bridge and have the ramp complete? Mr. Broskey said ramps need to be graded and will have stone but may not have asphalt due to timing till March 2024.

AGENDA ITEM 9 TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Veterans' Memorial Park

Mr. Lawson asked Council for their approval to open a separate bank account for the Veterans' Memorial Park fund. This account would be funded by committing \$75,000 of the ARPA funds received by the Town and residents would be able to make donations to the account as well.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bailey, that Council commit \$75,000 of the American Rescue Plan Act funds received by the Town to planning and construction of a Veterans' Memorial Park near the corner of Proctor Street North and Shawnee Avenue West. Motion resulted as follows:

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

b. Talley Property Transfer

Mr. Lawson asked Council to schedule a public hearing on the ordinance needed to transfer the section of public right of way that had been encroached on by the building on Mrs. Talley's property on.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council authorize a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 12-2023 being an ordinance to transfer property from the Town of Big Stone Gap to Elizabeth Talley. Motion resulted as follows:

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

c. Organizational Meeting

Mr. Lawson asked Council to schedule the Organization Meeting needed following the General Election last week. Amanda Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer, reminded Council that the meeting needed to be after the Regular Council meeting in December but before the anticipated Workshop Meeting date in January.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Bailey, that Council set an Organizational Meeting for December 19, 2023 at 6:30 pm to be held in the Council Chambers. Motion resulted as follows:

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

d. Projects Update**Veterans' Memorial Park**

Mr. Lawson said he would ask the National Guard about moving the monument from the Armory to the Veterans' Memorial Park discussed earlier or leaving it where it is. He also said at the Park there would need to be a place to sit down, a podium to speak from, and an area where a tent could be erected due to bad weather so the Town could still have a ceremony to honor our veterans.

Talley Property Transfer

Mr. Lawson reviewed the map provided by the surveyor with Council regarding the Talley Property Transfer.

Water Usage

Mr. Lawson said the reservoir volume is at 334 million gallons. He said the flow to Appalachia has gone down from 24 hours to 16 hours per day. The City of Norton's average is 97,000 gallons a day. Mr. Lawson said he and Mr. Hampton will be reviewing the water emergency procedures and will need to make changes to the existing provisions that will be brought to Council for approval. Current provisions state at 100 million gallons the 90-day emergency procedures would go into effect, but we need to look at a 120-day capacity to have a better time frame to allow for action. As a regional water supplier we need to work with surrounding towns and county's on these updated provisions and how that will effect the wholesale water customers. Currently we are supplying one-third of Appalachia's water supply. Mr. Lawson discussed the previous two years' total gallons of water delivered by and to the Town of Appalachia and our plant, as well as the current gallons sent to Appalachia recently. A further discussion on how to keep the water delivered by both Appalachia and Big Stone Gap equal and payment due for the water delivered to Appalachia in the past 30 days that was billed at the end of October.

Big Cherry Pier and Dock

Mr. Lawson said with the water level being lower at the reservoir debris and trees exposed around the banks were being cut by Town employees. We are looking at asking Job Corps for assistance with this clean-up project as well. He said he had talked to Quesenberry's to get a price for the fishing pier and the floating dock that is part of an upcoming grant project. No AMLER or ARC funds can be used for this project, however the Virginia Outdoors Grant funds could be used. He said that using Town employees to put the pilings in for the dock while water levels were low would save the town money in the long term.

Bullitt Park

Mr. Lawson said the pickleball courts and basketball courts were painted incorrectly the first time, so they had to be redone. We are in the process of getting updated pricing from the contractor to complete this project.

Skid-Steer

Mr. Lawson said the skid-steer will be delivered Thursday, November 16th and it will go to Big Cherry to assist in the clean-up.

Leaf Pickup

Mr. Lawson said we have had many calls about leaf pickup. Public Works are picking up a section at a time, when the six sections are completed, they will go back for additional pickups.

Christmas Decorations

Mr. Lawson said Christmas decorations are going up throughout the Town, soon everything will be ready for the Holiday season.

Cemeteries

Mr. Lawson said Glencoe and Oakview Cemetery operations would be burials only until Spring. Gary Harris and Nate Cheek, who returned to work for us just recently, would be the employees handling everything at the cemetery. All temporary staff have been let go.

Halloween Festivities

Mr. Lawson said that Halloween had great turn out and the events the night of October 28th was good; the Carnival at Miners' Park turned out great.

Board Appointments

Mr. Lawson said the Planning Commission has two seats open: David Gibson's seat was vacant following his death and Allen Morris is leaving Big Stone Gap so his seat will need to be filled as soon as possible. He asked Wendy McArtin, who was in attendance, to serve on the Planning Commission; Ms. McArtin accepted the invitation and will serve.

Mr. Lawson said that Ked Meade had been appointed to the Housing Authority before he was employed by Town, now as an employee he is ineligible to serve on the board. Members of the Housing Authority recommend Amy Hubbard and she has agreed to serve on both the Housing Authority and the Planning Commission.

Holiday Luncheons

Mr. Lawson said the employee Thanksgiving lunch will be November 16th and the Christmas lunch will be December 19th, both at 12 PM.

Festival of Trees

Mr. Lawson said the Festival of Trees at the Southwest Virginia Museum will start November 24th and end December 30th. Daytime viewing is Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Night viewings are scheduled every Friday and Saturday in December and November 24 & 25 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Regular admission rates are Adults: \$5, Children: ages 6-12 \$3, and kids under 6 are free.

Winter Gala

Mr. Lawson said Mountain Empire Community College's Winter Gala will be Saturday, December 2nd, at 6:30 pm at the Goodloe Center of Phillips-Taylor Hall. Ticket Prices are \$125 per couple, and additional sponsorship levels are available. All proceeds from the Gala will go towards the new Wise County Endowed Scholarship.

**AGENDA ITEM 10
COMMITTEE REPORT**

None

**AGENDA ITEM 11
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Councilman Bloomer said that Halloween was amazing. He thanked all the town employees. He said that an adult Angel Tree for Mountain Empire Older Citizens was at 404 Café and Creamery if anyone wanted to get an angel.

Councilman Gilley thanked all the town employees, Halloween was amazing, and the carnival was wonderful. He said congratulations to the re-elected council members.

Councilman Hughes thanked Mike and Wendy McArtin for speaking and their positive comments. He said the Craft Fair was great at Carnes gym. He congratulated Councilman Bloomer and Mayor Johnson on their re-election. He thanked all town employees for their hard work during this busy time of year. He said we need to look at the homeless population in the town as it is nearing winter; there are no services in the Town or Wise County to help with this problem.

Councilman McKinney congratulated the members on their re-election and thanked all town employees.

Councilwoman Lyke congratulated the re-elected council members and thanked them for serving again. She said she participated in a meeting today with area organizations to discuss the homeless population. It is disheartening what is happening and we need to find a solution. She said Halloween was great and the Museum had over 2,000 kids come through. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and safe travels.

Vice- Mayor Bailey thanked everyone involved with Halloween; she read a Facebook post that said there were over 6,000 kids served. She said it is monumental and amazing what is going on in our Town.

Mayor Johnson said it was an unbelievable Halloween. He appreciates being re-elected and thanked town employees and appreciates the harmony of our Public Works crews.

AGENDA ITEM 12 ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, 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