

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

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

January 9, 2024

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. 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: Hon. Robert Bloomer, Councilman

AGENDA ITEM 2

INVOCATION by Reverend Jacob Herron of East stone Gap United Methodist Church.

AGENDA ITEM 3

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4

ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Mayor Johnson asked for a motion and a second to adopt or amend the agenda.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of January 9, 2024 be adopted as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 5 COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

None

AGENDA ITEM 6 GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mayor Johnson asked for a Motion and a Second that the General Order of Business be approved as presented.

- a. Approval of Council Workshop of December 5, 2023, Regular Council Meeting of December 12, 2023, and the Organizational Meeting of December 19, 2023.
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. Departmental Reports for the month of December 2023.
Recommended Action: Received and filed.

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

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

AGENDA ITEM 7 TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

John Broskey said the paving was complete on the walking trail, but the work was not acceptable and will need to be redone. He has notified the contractor by email that the work was not satisfactory, and the redo will have to wait for warmer weather. He said there would be a change order for additional wood and metal railings, as well as concrete work for the trail.

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

Mr. Broskey said the bid opening for the System Wide Water Loss Phase 1A, 1B and 2 was originally scheduled for January 4, 2024, but due to the holidays the date was extended to January 11, 2024 at the request of the contractors. There were 7 or 8 contractors present at the bid opening. Bids are being reviewed and compared to the existing budget.

East Stone Gap Utilities Improvement Project

Mr. Broskey said that the Governor announced that the East Stone Gap Utilities Improvement Project was awarded \$1.2 million dollars in funding.

Italy Bottom Planning Grant-DHCD

Mr. Broskey said the planning grant funds were awarded from Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for the Italy Bottom area application we submitted.

Stephen Lawson said the next phase of the Greenbelt - River Bend – needed to begin the environmental assessment to get the project started. Mr. Broskey said that VDOT had emailed him regarding the alignments to get that started. He said there will be a meeting at the end of the week.

AGENDA ITEM 8 TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

a. Projects Update

Stephen Lawson said he was glad to see everyone is back to the office, he asked to keep Amanda in your prayers due to Danny being back in the ICU, he also asked for prayers for Cindy and Crystal as well.

Mr. Lawson said that New Year’s Eve resulted in record numbers for Good Times and Curklin’s. He said we have not received numbers from Big Cherry or Moon Dog Brick Oven.

Mr. Lawson said he had been working with Friends of Southwest Virginia on different grants, and they will be partnering with them for pocket park. He said the location being looked at is the old Carmines lot. He asked Mayor Johnson or the Vice-Mayor Bailey to check with the current property owner to inquire about purchasing or leasing the lot and name it Carmine’s Park.

Mr. Lawson said the lockers are being removed from hallway at Town Hall and they will be moved to Public Works for their use. He said we will be putting shelves in the vacant areas of halls to display pictures.

Mr. Lawson said we were very unhappy with asphalt on the Greenbelt. He said we will need to pour concrete there because that will be a better material to use. He also said that there will be concrete steps and railing added going to the river so people can walk down and fish.

Mr. Lawson said we were going to move forward with the River Bend project and there will be a meeting this week to get the plans finalized.

Mr. Lawson said there was a twelve-inch main line leak that was losing 22,000 gallons of water per minute. He said there was a contractor that was hauling rock and dropped a boulder and struck main line, an investigation is ongoing.

Mr. Lawson said the planning grant award for the Italy Bottom project was \$60,000. He said that Lenowisco and The Lane Group will be helping with the grant and the goal is to have that done quickly so we can apply in June 2024 for funding for the construction phase of this project and get it completed.

Mr. Lawson said \$1,291,524 was awarded for the East Stone Gap Utilities Improvements

Project; we will look at this project in sections to make sure we get the “most bang for our buck”. Mr. Lawson said we will need to look at minimum wage and/or changes to wages because this project has an income factor that could creating issues if there is another increase to the state minimum wage.

Mr. Lawson met with Southwest Virginia Museum regarding a fence they would like to erect around the Trigiani home. He said that the Town would allow the fence to be partially cross onto Town right of way.

Mr. Lawson said the Greenbelt in Lights had approximately 1,800 people to ride during the Holidays. He said that we need to look for other ways to tour the Greenbelt this next Holiday season. This is to help alleviate the wait time issue for the tours.

Mr. Lawson said he will be in Richmond the week of January 28, for meetings that involve everything from the Federal Building to block grants to Virginia Tourism. He will also be attending some of the County wide meetings.

Mr. Lawson said all the Annual Disclosures will be sent out this week and will need to be completed by all members and returned to Ms. Hawkins.

Mr. Lawson passed around thank you cards from East Tennessee State University and Mountain Empire Community College for the donations sent to their respective music schools. These funds were the proceeds from the two raffles from the Blue Highway Festival this year.

AGENDA ITEM 9 COMMITTEE REPORT

Councilman Gilley said the Planning Commission meeting was cancelled for January 1, 2024.

Councilwoman Bailey said the Mooneyhan property near Bullitt Park that was previously issued a violation letter has been cleaned up and looks great.

AGENDA ITEM 10 COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman McKinney said he had some requests about adding the trash route changes to the Big Stone Gap announcements on Facebook.

Councilman Hughes said there were lots of people out at year end. He thanked the police, fire, EMS, and all employees.

Councilman Gilley said he was glad to see everyone in attendance.

Vice- Mayor Bailey read a letter from Wendy Dillon, President of the Gap Partnership, that said on December 8, 2023 the Gap Partnership hosted a Greenbelt in Lights Fun Run with the proceeds being donated to the Tyler Flanary Memorial Skate Park. The Gap Partnership is also doing a matching grant for the Fun Run and at their January meeting they will be presenting to Tracy Jordan an honorary check in the amount of \$1,000 to go to the skate park, the Foundation requests Council to attend on January 18th at 8:30 am at the Visitor's Center. She gave a shout out to the Public Works department due to a sewer issue at her residence. She said within 3 to 4 hours of work they cleared up the issue.

Mayor Johnson said the Greenbelt in Lights was very enjoyable for everyone. He said the Town has a great crew of employees and thanked everyone for the great job this past year.

AGENDA ITEM 11 ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that the meeting be adjourned. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

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