

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

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

December 10, 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. Kent Gilley, Councilman
 Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
 Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman
 Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

Those Absent: Hon. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor

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

AGENDA ITEM 2 - INVOCATION by Pastor Timothy Robinson of Trinity Methodist Church.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4 - ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Bloomer, that the Agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of December 10, 2024 be amended to add agenda items 8b and 8c under the Town Manager's Report. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 5 - COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Larry Roberts, not a resident of Big Stone Gap, said he wanted to say thank you for the confidence and trust the Town had in him to head up the Blue Highway Festival. He said sadly he had decided to step aside but that he was raised in Wise County, he said this is home to him and he loves this place. He said one reason he took this on is because he loves bluegrass music, and this is where

bluegrass is from. He said that Ralph Stanley sang at his mom's graveside at Glencoe Cemetery and Big Stone Gap is special to him. Mr. Roberts said he wanted to give something back to where he was raised and where his heart was. He said that he and George Roat were friends, and they were together and said let's have a bluegrass festival and the town went on with that. He said we were talking about having the best bluegrass festival and in the first year we accomplished that with Blue Highway winning the IBMA Event of the Year. He said they sent out a questionnaire to people who had attended and the three reasons they loved the festival were: #1 the quality of the line up, #2 they were treated like family, and #3 accessibility. He said the festival was at a crossroads and he may have ruffled a few feathers with his enthusiasm and feels that others do not have that enthusiasm and that's why he feels he needs to step aside. He encouraged the Council members to review a text that was sent to Mr. Lawson and encouraged Mr. Lawson to share the text. He said it had been lots of fun and thanked Council for listening.

Roger Bays, Big Stone Gap, said he was here for support, and he knows how hard it is to start a festival. He said he was at a meeting trying to stir up tourism, and a lady there said any ideas that we can write on this chalk board, I said I would like to see a festival, and she said who said that, and that lady was Sharon Ewing. He said she and I got together along with my wife and Ron Short and started a committee to start Gathering in the Gap. He said that it was a fundraiser that raised over \$30,000 the three years he had it. He said we wanted it to grow and it's not an easy task and the festival leveled off, and along the way he resigned, because it was so much work. He said it was good thing to have something to draw tourism to Big Stone Gap, then then I hear the Blue Highway Festival is going to go its separate way, never got the promotion really needed to keep it growing. He said Blue Highway Festival has this momentum and is growing. He said two of his best friends have converted part of their homes to Air BNB's and that October is rented because of Blue Highway Festival. He said the festival is doing that for people, and he has no idea of the finances for this festival but is saddened that we are going to lose something that is growing.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. **Approval of minutes of the Council Workshop of November 5, 2024 and the Regular Council Meeting of November 12, 2024.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. **Departmental reports for the month of November 2024.**
Recommended Action: Received and filed.
- c. **Departmental reports for the month of November 2024.**
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: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney
Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey

AGENDA ITEM 7 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mr. Lawson gave the Town Engineer's Report in the absence of Mr. Broskey. Mr. Lawson said they had another AMLER meeting regarding the Big Cherry Project, and they need a letter from Charles Bledsoe's Office that the Charter states the land is protected.

AGENDA ITEM 8 - TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**a. Pageant Donation**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve a donation in the amount of \$900 to Kerrigan Robinson to support the scholarship fund for the three pageants she organized.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve a donation in the amount of \$900 to Kerrigan Robinson to support the scholarship fund for the three pageants she organized. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey

b. Public Hearing for Ordinance 24-2024 – Amend Section 13.6 – Alcohol Sales Hours

Mr. Lawson asked that Council authorize a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 24-2024.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council authorize a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 24-2024. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey

c. Resolution – 25-2024 – Appoint Adam Harris to Planning Commission

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 25-2024 being a resolution to appoint Adam Harris to the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to fill the unexpired term of Mark Lester set to expire October 31, 2025.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve Resolution 25-2024 being a resolution to appoint Adam Harris to the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to fill the unexpired term of Mark Lester set to expire October 31, 2025. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey

d. Resolution 26-2024 – ARPA Funds Spent and Obligated

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 26-2024 being a resolution detailing the ARPA Funds spent through November 2024 and obligated as of December 2024 to be spent by December 2026.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council approve Resolution 26-2024 being a resolution detailing the ARPA Funds spent through November 2024 and obligated as of December 2024 to be spent by December 2026. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke, McKinney

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Bailey

e. Ordinance 27-2024 – Skill Game Operations: Retail

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 27-2024.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Gilley, that Council authorize a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 27-2024. Motion resulted as follows:

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

f. Ordinance 18-2024 – Establish Downtown Big Stone Gap Historic District

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a joint public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 18-2024.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council authorize a joint public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 18-2024. Motion resulted as follows:

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

g. Ordinance 19-2024 – Recreational Substance: Retail

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a joint public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 19-2024.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Lyke, that Council authorize a joint public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on Ordinance 19-2024. Motion resulted as follows:

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

h. Proclamation – Peggy Beverly

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve a proclamation honoring Peggy Beverly's 100th Birthday.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve a proclamation honoring Peggy Beverly's 100th Birthday. Motion resulted as follows:

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

i. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson said the Town Employee Kids Christmas Party will be December 17th at 6 PM in the Gym.

Mr. Lawson said the Town Employee lunch will be December 19th at 12 PM in the Gym.

Mr. Lawson said the Christmas parade was a success, but it was very cold, so there was not a large turnout for the lighting of the new Christmas Tree in Miner's Park. He said he had heard great comments about the tree and the Merry Christmas sign.

Mr. Lawson said not to forget the Festival of Trees at the Southwest Regional Museum will be going on through December 27th.

Mr. Lawson said the June Tolliver annual open house will be December 14th from 12 – 4 PM.

Mr. Lawson said the Greenbelt in lights ride started Saturday December 7th and it still needed more displays. He said rides were every Friday and Saturday through December 28th. He said rides can be done during the week, just need to contact Gary Harris, Ked Meade or him.

Mr. Lawson said the Peggy Beverly presentation will be done by Gary Johnson at her birthday party Saturday at the John Fox, Jr. House.

Mr. Lawson said that Larry Roberts had a great start with the Blue Highway Festival. He said with issues this year from dates to budget and the issues with Mr. Roberts that the festival is not going away just needs some changes and he has been advised to keep it in October.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Gilley said the Planning Commission met last night and asked Council to please review the three ordinances and see if there will be any changes.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman McKinney said the parade was good but was cold and stayed for the tree lighting, thought it was a good turnout and had a good time.

Councilwoman Lyke said that the Slemp Foundation has guaranteed \$150,000 for the next two years for Blue Highway and asked if they could make a public announcement of support. She thanked Dr. Bays for everything he does for the Town and thanked Adam Harris for serving. She also thanked Ked Meade for all he does behind the scenes and Stephen Lawson. She said that Adriana Trigiani will be here Friday for the Origin Project at the Southwest Virginia Museum, the Project is for children. She said the parade was cold but good, thanked Matt Russell for being the next Chief of Police and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilman Hughes welcomed Matt Russell as Chief, and he thanked Adam Harris for serving and Roger Bays for coming. He said Blue Highway Festival is changing but is encouraged by the future and a great asset for our community. He said that 2024 was challenging due to his new job but was looking forward to more involvement in 2025. He asked everyone to keep Nancy in their prayers. He thanked all the employees and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councilman Gilley said thanks to all employees and that everybody is doing wonderful job and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and encouraged everyone to come next Thursday to the Christmas dinner.

Councilman Bloomer said thanks to all the Town employees and that Saturday December 14th is Brunch with Santa from 10 am – 2 pm at the 404 Café and Creamery.

Mayor Johnson asked Crystal Lyke about the bench from the Garden Club for Lee Harris. Councilwoman Lyke said she could connect The Garden Club with whoever is heading that up with the Fire Department, but that it will take a long time to get enough plastic to do the bench. Kent Gilley said that Dan Gibson was checking on prices for benches and about taking donations to purchase a bench. Mayor Johnson said he hates to see Hamm go but congratulations to Matt Russell. He said the Gala was a good event and thanked all the employees, and said it had been a great year, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

AGENDA ITEM 11 - ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.

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