

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

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

March 04, 2025

6:30 PM

**AGENDA ITEM 1
Call to Order and Roll Call**

Mayor Johnson called the March 04, 2025 meeting to order.

Council 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 Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
 Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney
 Mr. Matt Russell, Chief of Police

**AGENDA ITEM 2
JOINT PUBLIC HEARING**

Planning Commission Present: Ms. Wendy Warden, – Chairwoman
 Ms. Amy Hubbard – Vice-Chairwoman
 Mrs. Freda Bishop – Member
 Mr. Kent Gilley – Member
 Mr. Adam Harris - Member
 Mr. Brian Jones, Member
 Mr. Greg Kress, Member

Planning Commission Absent: Mr. John Morrissey – Member
 Mr. Lorenzo Rodriguez – Member
 Mr. Matthew Bright, Administrator

Mayor Johnson Recessed the Council Meeting.

Mayor Johnson opened the Public Hearing for the Ordinance 17-2024 Tiny Houses Ordinance and called for comments from the public.

No comments from the public were made.

Mayor Johnson closed the Public Hearing for the Ordinance 17-2024 Tiny Houses Ordinance and reconvened the Council Workshop.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of February 4, 2025 and the Regular Council Meeting of February 11, 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – HIGH KNOB MUSIC FESTIVAL – Buddy Delph

Buddy Delph along with Jean Branham came to say thank you to the Town that has supported the High Knob Music Festival in the past and he announced this year's festival will be June 14th from 10:30 am – 7 pm. He said young students will take the stage to open the festival. He said this is a free festival and outside food and drinks are allowed, and it is encouraged. He said they have a verbal agreement with the Forestry Department for the ADH Handicap observation deck. He said this will not be done before the festival because the current contractor has fallen through due to health issues. He said they hope to get it built this year. Jean Branham said they want to extend the ADA observation deck to the lake. Mr. Delph said they have the funds raised for the ramp, but the cost to put on the festival approximates \$12,000. Stephen Lawson told them to fill out an application with the RAPHA Foundation, he said they could help with the observation deck.

AGENDA ITEM 5 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mr. Broskey said contractor for the System Wide Water Improvement Project Phase IA, 2A and 2B will be back after the weather breaks at Italy Bottom. He said they are doing pressure tests, Bac-T tests, and are 70% complete with the line work. He said the project is expected to be completed in about three months. Councilman Bloomer asked about the water leaks; Mr. Broskey said they had seen some improvements. Mr. Broskey said that the design for Phase 3 in the Valley is being worked on and will advance there in the spring.

AGENDA ITEM 6

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Proclamation – Sunny Side Lounge

Mr. Lawson said this was a Proclamation welcoming Sunny Side Lounge to Big Stone Gap located in the Shawnee Shopping Center.

b. Proclamation – Designating April 2025 Child Abuse Awareness Month

Mr. Lawson said this was a Proclamation Designating April 2025 Child Abuse Awareness Month.

c. Ordinance 17-2024 - Tiny Houses Ordinance

Mr. Lawson said this is an Ordinance for Tiny Houses being an ordinance regarding construction requirements for homes that are 400 square feet or less, also known as tiny homes.

d. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson said election packets are available and need to be returned by June 17, 2025 at 7 PM.

Mr. Lawson said flood cleanup was almost complete, waiting for drier conditions to clean ditches on private property. He said we worked well with VDOT on drainage near the Lee County line to town limits; he said this is not our responsibility but working with VDOT to help.

Mr. Lawson said the Skate park had 93 responses from the schools and 111 from the public. He said most like the current design but wanted higher jumps, more rails and green space. He said the redesign eliminates the cabin so will need to meet with the cabin group to discuss. He said the project has a chimney and concrete area under roof but will not be redoing or renovating the cabin. Nancy Bailey said they had \$30,000 to move or renovate and said it is not enough to do anything. Mr. Lawson said they could save the chimney and have a plaque for the cabin in the new build.

Mr. Lawson said there was one ticket left for the Chamber Gala April 5, 2025 and to let him know if anyone wanted it.

Mr. Lawson said Parks and Rec had mulched the flower beds around Town and have been working on the bathrooms at the Little League fields. He said the splashpad plumbing and electricity are working now.

Mr. Lawson said the Federal Building application is ongoing with Matthew Bright's assistance.

Mr. Lawson said all leaks have been repaired and we should give a shout out to Public Works.

Mr. Lawson said the Visitor Center is hosting a Virginia DEQ local and regional water supply planning regulation meeting tomorrow at 1:00 pm.

Mr. Lawson said he had a meeting with the Union High School Athletics. He said they discussed the LED lights at the Park, and they plan on improving the reserved seating just trying to figure out how to do that due to bad feedback and some seats are broken and cannot get replacements. He said they need benches for the locker rooms rather than chairs and the track needs resurfacing. He said the last time it was done was in 2018 and the use of spiked shoes and high traffic areas have made bad places on the track.

Mr. Lawson said the budgeted capital projects were complete with the exception of the utility truck for Parks and Rec and some fencing work.

Mr. Lawson said that Jinny Turman will be at the Regular Council Meeting to present a highway marker for the J.W. Bland High School.

Mr. Lawson said there will be a closed session next week for an employee issue.

Mr. Lawson said at the Gun Trade-in during qualifying and training the Police Department tried a new gun and they have decided to change to a new setup.

Councilman Bloomer asked about an extra light at the Pickle Ball Courts. Mr. Lawson said the contractor's truck is down and there was electric line damage from a tree branch falling but it is on the agenda. Councilman Bloomer said he does not recommend painting the bleachers, he said that an acid stain would work better.

Mr. Lawson said an update on Big Cherry was a conversation with SCTC to get WIFI and other connections that would replace the solar panels that powered lights and cameras. He said once replaced they could be used at other places around Town.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Gilley said the Planning Commission met but nothing to report tonight.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilwoman Lyke said she was glad we can improve the equipment for the Police Department. She thanked all the employees.

Councilman Hughes said thanks to all and that the mulch was looking good, said it was nice to see cleanup and weather improving. He said special thanks to the Police Department and thanked all the employees and the Planning Commission for all they do.

Councilman Gilley thanked the Planning Commission for attending the meeting and the Town employees.

Councilman Bloomer thanked the Planning Commission for attending the meeting and all the employees. He also recognized Anesha Chandler's post about Chris Kelley praying for her business.

Councilwoman Bailey said the Pinwheel Planting at MEOC will be April 4th at 10 am and she encouraged everyone to attend. She thanked all the employees and the Planning Commission.

Mayor Johnson said he appreciates all the work that makes our job easier. He asked Stephen Lawson about the bench for Lee Harris and Mr. Lawson said he would get an update report on it at next week's meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 11 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned 7:23 pm.

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