

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

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

April 01, 2025

6:30 PM

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

Vice-Mayor Bailey called the April 01, 2025 meeting to order.

Council Present: 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

Council Absent: Hon. Gary Johnson, Mayor

AGENDA ITEM 2 - REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES

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

AGENDA ITEM 3 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mr. Broskey said the water line work is ongoing on 5th Street and Italy Bottom with all connections made and the contractor plans to abandon that area tomorrow. He said Sunrise Village applications were submitted Monday. He said there had been a meeting with VDOT regarding the sidewalk that was applied for in 2017 that will go from the C. Bascom Slemple Memorial Library to Bullitt Park. He said the mapping and the environmental footprint has changed and that costs have increased from 2017 to now.

AGENDA ITEM 4

JEFF HESS WITH HEART OF APPALACHIA

Jeff Hess with Heart of Appalachia said he grew up in Honaker and ran a small business after high school for 15 years then went to work for the Virginia Tourism Corporation then on April 1, 2024 came on board with the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, which was formed in 1993 by the Virginia General Assembly. He handed out a packet to Council and said it is hard to retain people

and that is why he came to the meeting. He said he has the Executive Director title but on any given day he wears many hats. He said the organization has two employees. He said in 1993 Lenowisco and Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission had visionaries for this area in more than coal but with tourism and that is how Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority came about. He said he inherited some good work, and that Big Stone Gap has 3 to 4 of their motorcycle routes that come through town and the Appalachian backroads. He said his focus is to work with other tourism to bring top notch marketing for Lee, Scott, Wise, Dickenson, Russell, Buchanan, Tazewell and the City of Norton. He said small businesses must thrive not just survive. He said that about 8 or 10 years ago a gentlemen, Mr. Steve Lawson, came to his previous organization and gave this great motivating speech to Be the Change that made a lasting impression. He said the Town has two representatives on his Board for Wise County, Ked Meade and Natalie Chapman. He said each County and the City has two representatives. He said in closing due to the Town's diligence and work you should feel proud and he came for the Blue Highway Festival and the nation was represented. He asked if anyone had any questions. Vice-Mayor thanked him for coming and Stephen Lawson thanked him for coming to the meeting and for coming to the events and helping.

AGENDA ITEM 5

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Proclamation – Emily Arrington Photography

Mr. Lawson said this was a Proclamation welcoming Emily Arrington Photography to Big Stone Gap located in the Shawnee Shopping Center.

b. Proclamation – B12 Results Medical

Mr. Lawson said this was a Proclamation welcoming B12 Results Medical to Big Stone Gap located at 18 East 5th Street North in Big Stone Gap.

c. Tour de Crackers Neck Bike Ride

Mr. Lawson said this is to ask Council to approve a donation of \$350 to the Tour de Crackers Neck bike race.

d. Cumberland Airport Commission

Mr. Lawson said the Town had budgeted Cumberland Airport Commission \$1,500 for the current year, but received a letter from Jospeh Teague, Airport Manager, wanting the Town to upgrade their appropriation to \$5,000 to help them continue to provide airport services to this region. Mr. Lawson said he needed to do more research and get more information from the Commission to present to Council before a decision could be made.

e. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson said the Sunrise Village Grant went in on Monday.

Mr. Lawson said Ked Meade completed the Cumberland Forest Fund on Friday and it was submitted.

Mr. Lawson said he is still working on the Federal Building application. He said they still needed to get upstairs to get some photos but have been unable to contact anyone with access to the second floor.

Mr. Lawson reminded Council that the Chamber Gala was this Saturday April 5, 2025 at 5:30.

Mr. Lawson said he and Amanda Hawkins will meet with the talent person for Blue Highway Festival next Tuesday to finalize the contracts that we have and will be announcing the partial lineup on April 21st.

Mr. Lawson said we cannot sell any graves at Glencoe Cemetery at this time. He said we have approximately 2,500 graves that have a deed and are sold but no burial. He said we have graves, but they are on the steep slopes and would need to purchase equipment to dig but then you have the stone setting and things like that, so it is hard to do. He said we can do cremations but selling graves is how we take care of the cemetery, there are spaces available in the Mausoleum and in the Columbarium.

Mr. Lawson said that Sherry and Logan Gilliam requested naming a bridge after the late Rick Gilliam, but he suggested for them to look at benches at Lonesome Pine Country Club. He said these benches could be put along the Greenbelt and the Town could donate the labor and concrete to set the metal benches when purchased by a family. He said there would need to be a rules and regulations for how to do this consistently.

Mr. Lawson said Powell Valley Dental's Expansion Ceremony will be May 2nd at 2 PM.

Councilman Bloomer said that Josephine Rodrigues works for the Federal Government and was asking for an office in the Slemp Building. Mr. Lawson said all offices have been decommissioned so until the Town acquires the building nothing can be done. He said the Boutique Hotel idea was not going to work due to construction changes and the Government does not want much change to the building. He said that the offices would be leased out and some of the Town offices would be moved to that building.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

AGENDA ITEM 7 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Hughes said he was glad to hear from Jeff about the Tourism and he thanked all the employees for everything they do.

Councilwoman Lyke said the Pinwheel Ceremony is Friday April 4th at 10 am at MEOC. She said Union Little League opening day went very well and the Gilliam family threw out the first pitch. She thanked all the employees.

Councilwoman Bailey thanked everyone for coming. She also mentioned the Pinwheel Ceremony and encouraged everyone to come. She thanked Jeff for his presentation and thanked all the employees of the Town.

AGENDA ITEM 8
ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned 7:10 pm.

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