

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

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

May 06, 2025

6:30 PM

AGENDA ITEM 1

Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Johnson called the May 06, 2025 meeting to order.

Council Present: Hon. Gary Johnson, Mayor
 Hon. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor
 Hon. Robert Bloomer, Councilman – arrived at 6:35 PM
 Hon. Kent Gilley, Councilman
 Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman – left at 7:00 PM
 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 - REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of April 1, 2025 and the Regular Council Meeting of April 08, 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – GEM OF VIRGINIA

Mr. Lawson said that Gem of Virginia could not do a zoom call with Council, but they provided a report for Ked Meade to review with Council. Mr. Meade said the provided report stated the members' reached, mirrored the Town events to reach a larger audience, and the contract renewal is \$25,000 per year or \$2,100 per month. Mr. Lawson said the renewal date was coming up and Council needs to make a decision whether to continue the contract with Gem of Virginia. There was some discussion by Council regarding the renewal.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM

Burke Greear came to invite Council to the 17th Annual Gathering in the Gap that will be Saturday May 24th at the Southwest Virginia Museum. He said there will be more craft vendors and sponsorships this year and the Festival seems to be on an upswing for the Big Stone Gap area. He thanked all the Town Departments for their help with the Festival.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – SHARON FISHER – CLINCH COALITION

Sharon Fisher said she was a Big Stone Gap resident and is currently serving as the President of the Clinch Coalition. She said the Clinch Coalition came out of large grass roots movement 26 years ago to protect the forests and are still doing that today. She gave Council a handout for the USFS Clinch Ranger District High Knob Salvage project and said she wanted to highlight some of it with Council. She talked about the devastation of Hurricane Helene in the national forests; and that the Coalition has over 3,000 images of the Hurricane damage to High Knob. She said with the help of Virginia Tech they want to have one large photo and use this for a base line for future damage. She said on March 28th 2025 the Clinch Range District sent out a notice that they were going to start a “salvage project” of downed trees. She said they were only given two weeks to respond not the normal 30 days. She said she came to say that the High Knob Salvage Project Unit 1 is directly above Big Cherry water reservoir and could cause damage to the Big Cherry Basin and wanted to present this to the Council and let them know they are only objecting to Project #1 above the Big Cherry watershed.

AGENDA ITEM 6**TOWN ENGINEER’S REPORT**

Mr. Lawson gave the Town Engineer’s Report in absence of Jon Broskey:

- The contractor has completed the work over near the Cadet Tank on West 12th Street and Washita Avenue and a small section on Albemarle Street.
- The contractor is currently working on reconnections in these areas and then abandonment over the next two weeks.
- The contractor decided to wait on the exploration of the dip in the road until new waterline was installed and the old was abandoned.
- The current schedule is to dig out the area next week.

AGENDA ITEM 5**TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT****a. Proclamation – National Garden Week**

- Proclamation designating June 2nd through June 8th , 2025 as National Garden Week in Big Stone Gap.

b. Resolution 08-2025 – Application to GSA for the Slemo Federal Building

- Resolution authorizing the application to the Administrator of General Services State of Virginia for the C. Bascom Slemo Federal Building.

c. Council Meeting Dates of September 2nd, October 7th, and November 11th

- Asking Council to change the Council Meeting Dates of September 2nd, October 7th and November 11th due to events scheduled at those times.

d. Proposed FY2025 Budget

- Proposed FY2025 Budget was given to each Council Member for them to review before next week’s Regular Council Meeting.

e. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson gave the following updates to Council:

- The Farmer's Market has a new manager, Leigh Ann Wallace, that started last week; the schedule is Thursday's, 4PM to 7PM, and Saturday's 9AM to 1PM, through October 4th.
- The Fire Departments is presenting 30-year service awards tonight at the Fire Hall.
- The Federal application was submitted for the Federal Building. GSA said the National Park Service had received and is reviewing the application, and we are awaiting a response.
- Bridge inspections are completed and will be reviewed. 50/50 revenue sharing application with VDOT has opened and if there is a need for major repair they are due May 2025. Pre-applications and final applications are due September 15th.
- Ked Meade received the Malia Grant to start a Storywalk within the community and it will be on the greenbelt.
- Memorial benches for the Greenbelt will cost \$1,400 and the Town will install them in select places.
- The LOVE sign is completed at MECC. Ked Meade will need to work on the design and concept with Lisa Davis.
- PAWS of SWVA is having a Community Yard Sale and Adoption Event Saturday, May 10th from 9AM to 3PM at the Visitor's Center.
- J. Great Inflatable Festival at Frog Level Park will be May 10th – 11th from 10 AM–7 PM.
- Mr. Lawson said Kid's Fishing Day will be May 24th.
- Gathering in the Gap is May 24th at the Museum.
- The parcel trade with the Collier family for the Greenbelt is complete.
- The Town is applying for two grants, one with VDOT and one with Transportation Alternative for the Greenbelt expansion. The Town is applying for a grant with Virginia Energy with a letter of intent due in June. The VDOT application is due in August.
- June 7th will be the VA District 13 All Star Opening Ceremony with the parade starting at 10AM.
- The final plans for the skate park had been received and there was no changes in the layout.
- There was a property sale near Double D Tire that is causing issues with parking. The Town will have to check boundaries for public parking.
- The Police Department has shown improvements in their scores at the range with the new weapons that were purchased earlier in the year. The Department wanted to thank Council for approving the purchase of new equipment.
- Beth Hagan Proclamation Ceremony will be Thursday May 9th at 7PM at the Visitor's Center.
- B12 Medical Results ribbon cutting will be Saturday May 10th at 11AM.
- Dedication of the Garfield Long Sr. Memorial Cemetery will be Saturday June 21st 11AM.
- Tour De Cracker's Neck Bike Race has been postponed to June 14th.
- Council needs to review the Ordinances from the Planning Commission before next week's Regular Council Meeting so they can be approved or tabled.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Gilley asked Council to review and mark up the Architectural Review Board Ordinance from the Planning Commission and mark any changes they may have so Council can go over them at next week's meeting. He said the Yard Sale Ordinance states you can only have 4 per year and must have a permit. He said there is an ask for a Special Use Permit for the Adams', owners of bus terminal, to add an apartment to the bottom of the building.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Gilley reminded Council of Kid's Fishing Day Saturday May 24th starts at 9AM and will have hotdogs and s'mores.

Councilwoman Lyke asked about the Heather Moses presentation, Lawson said that was false information and recommended doing nothing. She asked when paving starts, Lawson said paving has started and said if Council has paving requests to get them to him. She also asked about the information for the airport donation, Ms. Hawkins said that would be available at next week's meeting. Councilwoman Lyke said she would like to share her research regarding the hospital's use and was answered that it is used once or twice a year. She said she would be willing to give extra for that reason on a one-time donation. She said the Luncheon on the Lawn will be June 20th at 12PM at the Museum and they will feed the officers working the event. She thanked the Town for support and cooperation.

Councilwoman Bailey said as she was collecting signatures for the election she was asked about the house on the corner, Mr. Lawson said there is a court docket with Jimmy McElrath. He thanked all the Town employees.

Mayor Johnson thanked all the employees and reported he was in good health and felt better than expected.

**AGENDA ITEM 10
CLOSED SESSION**

Motion by Bailey, seconded by Lyke, that Council enter a Closed Session in accordance with Virginia Code Section 2.3-3711 (A) (1) for the discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body for the purpose of discussing personnel and potential legal liability.

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

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: Hughes

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Bloomer, that Council reconvene into Open Session.

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

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: Hughes

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED SESSION

Amanda Hawkins, Clerk Treasurer, read the Certification of Closed Session and called for a roll call vote resulting as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: Hughes

AGENDA ITEM 11 - ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

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