

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

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

December 02, 2025

6:30 PM

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

Mayor Johnson called the December 02, 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 - REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of November 5, 2025 and the Regular Council Meeting of November 12, 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – ISAIAH 117 HOUSE

Brandi Martin, Expansion Coordinator for the Isaiah 117 House for Wise, Scott, Lee and the City of Norton, introduced herself and shared a video presentation with Council. Ms. Martin made these comments after the presentation. They want to bring an Isaiah 117 House to this area, and it would be the 63rd house. There is an open house now in Lynchburg and there will be houses in Washington and Russell Counties within the next month or two with one being built in Rockingham County. Removal day is the when a child is removed from a home and is not as grand as it may seem. As of now the child will go to the DSS office to wait for family placement while these houses provide a place for children to go and wait instead of waiting in an office cubicle or conference room. The Isaiah 117 House provides them a warm and inviting environment. DSS will have an office at the Isaiah House. A brochure was handed out to Council which had the mission of Isaiah 117 House. The organization is 100% debt free, September 7th was the kickoff for six-months of raising awareness, after the six months which is March 2026 the Organization will look at where they are and hopefully will have land or home donation. Big Stone Gap is centrally located to all DSS offices involved. Councilman Hughes asked what one year budget was, Ms. Martin answered \$172,000 with one full-time and 2 part-time employees. Councilman Hughes also asked how does it work to get a piece of land, Ms. Martin answered there are various ways but most common is someone will contact them and donate the land. Councilman Bloomer asked about the visitation room when family

is getting kids back under supervision, Ms. Martin answered it is a small efficiency apartment that is connected to the house that accommodates the supervised visitation. Mr. Lawson asked about the house donation, what square footage is needed, Ms. Martin responded not sure but will get it, the land has to be $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 acre. She said most building materials are donated. She said there would be a March Christmas Breakfast Fundraiser December 11th at 9AM at East Stone Gap Methodist Church.

AGENDA ITEM 4

TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mr. Broskey gave the Town Engineer's Report as follows:

- Phase 1B – site cleanup is completed.
- Phase 3 – authorization to bid.
- East Stone Gap – working on design.

AGENDA ITEM 5

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Resolution 24-2025 VA Outdoors Foundation Signatory Authority

Asking Council to approve Resolution 24-2025 VA Outdoors Foundation Signatory being a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to sign all documents, agreements, and administer the Virginia Outdoors Foundation Grant #1673.

b. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson gave the following updates to Council:

- Skate Park – Will be changing the color schemes to better match the park and will be getting additional concrete quotes to do flat concrete sitting areas. Weather allowing the contractors will be done before Christmas.
- Sidewalk at GoodTimes is poured and will need some finishing touches, when completed we can start down 1st Street weather allowing.
- MECC is moving the lineman program out of Appalachia. The classes will be on campus, but they will need a place to set their poles etc. It was discussed to use the area near the old pool and possibly Big Cherry. Will need to meet with ODP to discuss leaving the poles once set.
- GSA sent an email – parking lot work has started, but with busy season for the Post Office, they will not move until January 2026. It said the transfer of property will not be until February.
- Employee Christmas lunch is scheduled for December 16th at 12PM.
- Christmas parade Thursday at 6PM and tree lighting to follow. Nancy Bailey will be the Grand Marshall. He asked any other Council members that wanted to participate in the parade to let him know. He went over the lineup for the parade.
- Festival of Trees is now through December 31st, closed on Christmas Day. Tuesday-Friday, 10AM – 4PM, Saturday, 10AM -5PM, and Sunday, 1-5PM, Night Viewings December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 and 27 5-8PM.
- Greenbelt in Lights rides will be December 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, and 27 from 6PM to 9PM.
- The June Tolliver House and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine Annual Christmas Open House is December 13, 12-4PM.
- Christmas is Appalachia hosted by Ron Short at the Visitor's Center is December 21, 5-6PM.

- Organizational Meeting will be December 9 at 7:30PM. Council members must take their Oath of Office before this meeting.
- Mr. Lawson said he was excited about the Isaiah 117 House, and he was pleased to see it coming to Big Stone Gap.
- Mr. Lawson stated the Town of Big Stone Gap has no involvement with the Travis Turner case.
- Fire Department Annual Christmas Dinner is December 6 at the Church of Christ at 7PM, anyone wanting to attend let Mr. Lawson know.
- MECC's Gala is December 6 at 6:30PM at the Goodloe Center, let Amanda Hawkins know if you plan on attending.
- Meeting with the Italy Bottom Community Development Project, still in the paperwork phase of this project.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Gilley said the Planning Commission met and had a problem with a permit and it has been given to Charles Bledsoe.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Bloomer said he appreciated the attendees and the Isaiah 117 House for coming to the meeting.

Councilman Gilley said he was impressed with the library addition. Mr. Lawson said he was concerned about the lighting or the lack thereof.

Councilman Hughes thanked the visitors for coming, thanked Brandy for her presentation, and that he is really encouraged to hear that the Isaiah 117 House is being established in Big Stone Gap. He said the Town will find the step to help make this happen. He thanked all the employees for everything they do.

Councilman McKinney said this would be his last workshop meeting and that 7 ½ years ago the only restaurant downtown was Red Flower, he said there has been a lot of growth in the downtown area and at Bullitt Park. He said the water and sewer lines have been improved, events every weekend now, all this has been accomplished by everyone, every employee working together and the vision, dedication, and hard work of the Town Manager, along with Amanda Hawkins. He said Gary loves this town; he is great Mayor. He said the late Phil Robbins came down a little over year ago and said we need to finish, and he wanted to echo that and keep working together.

Councilwoman Lyke said she agrees with Councilman McKinney in everything he said and she also echoed all the previous sentiments. She said the Friends Group has a District 6 meeting, Gathering in the Gap has Sister Sadie as the headliner, tickets go on sale January 2026. She said the Stats of what local Museums brings to our area are Natural Tunnell day visitor – \$2.3 million, overnight non-resident \$1.6 million, Southwest Virginia Museum day visitor – \$944,000, overnight non-resident \$394,000. She said Gathering in Gap does bring money into Big Stone Gap and said Council needs to review the Peddlers license fee before their event in May. She said she was very happy to have an Isaiah 117 House in the area.

Councilwoman Bailey echoed everything that Aaron said. She said there has been nothing more worthwhile than serving on this Council and it would have been 20 years in January. She said this was the best council to serve with because we got things done. She said she appreciates Stephen Lawson and Amanda Hawkins for all their hard work, and she was honored to be the Grand Marshall of the parade.

Mayor Johnson said he had been here a long time, and we finally got something that's working and he knows that Adam and Turk will fit right in. He thanked everyone for coming and said it was the end of the year and hopes everything goes well into the next.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.

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