

TOWN OF BIG STONE GAP, VIRGINIA
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

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

January 13, 2026

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. Robert Bloomer, Councilman
	Hon. Kent Gilley, Vice-Mayor
	Hon. Adam Harris, Councilman
	Hon. W. Turk Hollinger, Councilman
	Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
	Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman *
	*arrived at 6:31

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

AGENDA ITEM 2 - INVOCATION by Pastor Sandra Jones of Williams Chapel AME Zion 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 January 13, 2026 be amended to add Item 8f Site Plan Review Joint Public Hearing and remove Item 8b Resolution 04-2026 2nd Amendment Sanctuary. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson
Nayes: Gilley, Lyke Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 5 – COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

James Porchie – 111 2nd Avenue West – came to address Council regarding the speeding on Aviation Road. He said this was the 3rd time he had been to Council and wanted to know what was going to be done to control the speed limit on his road. He asked why there are no thru signs for trucks from 7PM-8AM in some residential areas and no thru trucks in other areas. Councilman Hughes said the Public Safety Committee would meet to review sign ordinances, speed tables and explore regulations for that area. Mayor Johnson asked that the Public Safety Committee look at the flashing speed signs also for cost and effectiveness.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Approval of minutes of Council Workshop Meeting of December 02, 2025, Regular Council Meeting of December 09, 2025 and the Organizational Meeting of December 09, 2025. Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. Departmental Reports for the month of December 2025. Recommended Action: Received and filed.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Harris, that the General Order of Business be approved as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 7 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mr. McKinney reported that:

- Phase III Water - No updates.
- Sidewalk – He, Stephen Lawson and John Broskey had a meeting with VDOT yesterday to discuss the plans for the sidewalk at the museum passing by C. Bascom Library and then by the Skate Park. After the meeting there was an agreed upon plan and will be getting the plans and specs together to get the project moving forward.

AGENDA ITEM 8 - TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**a. Resolution 03-2026 – Reappoint Tyler McFarland**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 03-2026 being a resolution reappointing Tyler McFarland to a four-year term on the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to expire on January 31, 2030.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Harris, that Council approve Resolution 03-2026 being a resolution reappointing Tyler McFarland to a four-year term on the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to expire on January 31, 2030. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

c. Resolution 05-2026 – Closing Bond Resolution – Rural Development

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 05-2026 being a resolution authorizing the sale of water revenue bonds of the Town of Big Stone Gap in a principal amount not to exceed \$1,762,000, previously authorized, and providing for the form, details and payment of the bonds.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Gilley, that Council approve Resolution 05-2026 being a resolution authorizing the sale of water revenue bonds of the Town of Big Stone Gap in a principal amount not to exceed \$1,762,000, previously authorized, and providing for the form, details and payment of the bonds. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 8 - TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT (Continued)**d. Ordinance 06-2026 – Camping and Sleeping in Public Ordinance**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a joint public hearing with the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to be held on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance.

Motion by Harris, seconded by Bloomer, that Council authorize a joint public hearing with the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to be held on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke
Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

e. Resolution 07-2026 – Appropriate funds from Appalachian Regional Commission

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 07-2026 being a resolution to appropriate \$331,233 of funds from Appalachian Regional Commission for the Sunrise Village Water Extension Project for the Town of Big Stone Gap.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve Resolution 07-2026 being a resolution to appropriate \$331,233 of funds from Appalachian Regional Commission for the Sunrise Village Water Extension Project for the Town of Big Stone Gap. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke
Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

f. Site Plan Review Joint Public Hearing – McNutt Site Plan

Mr. Lawson asked Council to authorize a joint public hearing with the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to be held on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the site plan for the construction of a garage at 1710 Shawnee Ave E.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Hollinger, that Council authorize a joint public hearing with the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to be held on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 6:30 pm to receive public comment on the site plan for the construction of a garage at 1710 Shawnee Ave E. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke
Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

Projects Update

Mr. Lawson gave the following updates:

- Sidewalk – commend Pat McKinney and Jon Broskey's work on this project. This project started in 2018 and now that the skate park is completed this would give us an ending route. VDOT anticipates the project to be completed by June even with project being over budget.

Projects Update (Continued)

- Received calls about where doublewides are allowed vs. not. Modular homes are not a doublewide. VA DHCD has a plate that determines if it is a modular home or a doublewide, a paper explaining the description was handed out to Council.
- Tax reassessments are due every 5 years and is done by Wise County. The tax Rate for Big Stone Gap is only thing Council can change and must be done during the budget process.
- Isaiah 117 House sent a thank you for allowing them to come to Council and present their proposal. Meeting with Cindy Elkins with Ballad to discuss was cancelled and will be rescheduled. Councilman Bloomer asked if there was a backup plan if the property at the Hospital is declined for use, Mr. Lawson said the William's property on Orr Street would be the backup location. Councilman Bloomer suggested tearing down the Girl Scout Cabin near town hall, Mr. Lawson said there is a historical significance with that building and that other plans had been discussed for the use of it.
- Skate Park ARC grant will be finalized before adding to the project, any moneys left over will be used for landscaping the project. March 2026 a skate Park grant comes open in the amount of \$25,000 to be issued in June.
- Noah Mooneyhan lost a friend in an accident on I-81. He and a group of friends ask to help build a dirt bike trail back toward the pickleball courts and dedicate something in honor of his friend.
- Meeting with AMLER and Lenowisco is tomorrow to begin work on Big Cherry.
- Mural - Ked Meade has measured and took pictures of the side of the building in Miner's Park that Sara Botts owns for the RFP for the mural that Friends of Southwest Virginia has the money for will be going out by the end of the week.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - COMMITTEE REPORTS

Vice-Mayor Gilley said the Planning Commission is scheduling a special meeting on January 26th regarding the site plan review. He said after that meeting there may be more information for Council.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilwoman Lyke knows how some feel about the 2nd amendment. She does think it would deter business from Big Stone Gap, and if it did deter business she would like to see studies on that. She said she has visited 43 out of the 50 states and never seen it deter tourism.

Councilman Hughes thanked James Porchie for coming to the meeting and the Public Safety Committee will have a meeting and find a solution for the problem on Aviation Road. He said he was excited to that the skate park was being so heavily used. He said he understand that some people are frustrated with the Resolution tonight, he said this Resolution is already in effect and does not see the need to revisit Resolutions that are in effect. He encouraged everyone to get their Flu shot because there is lots of sickness going around in the area. He thanked all the staff, Police, Fire and EMS.

Councilman Hollinger said he attended training last week and it a good training and he got to meet a lot of people from different areas. He asked Pat McKinney if it was his first time here, Pat McKinney answered yes, Councilman Hollinger congratulated him. He thanked Sandra Jones for coming to lead the invocation.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION (Continued)

Councilman Harris welcomed Pat McKinney. He said he also went to Richmond for training, and it was great representing the Town of Big Stone Gap. He said it was a great networking opportunity and he learned a lot. He said like Councilman Hughes the Resolution is already in effect, and he is a gun owner, but he feels like there is no need to go back and keep doing Resolutions that are already done. He thanked James Porchie for coming and said Council would definitely look into his problem. He thanked Pastor Jones for coming and leading Council in the invocation and all the guests in attendance. He thanked Ked Meade for all the Christmas activities.

Councilman Bloomer said he agrees with Councilman Hughes and Councilman Harris that Council voted on the Resolution once and it is already in effect. He said it is not Council's job to determine what is constitutional, that it up to the courts, Council does not get paid for that. He said the lights and the controller on the pedestrian bridge were stolen, he asked Council if anyone sees them to let him know. He asked about the sidewalk at Winky Whitt's property, are we waiting on weather. Mr. Lawson said yes we are waiting on the weather, but it is still in the plans.

Vice-Mayor Gilley said he respects everyone's view on the 2nd Amendment to everyone, but many people have asked him about it, he set a motion to put the 2nd amendment back on the agenda, Lyke seconded. Ms. Hawkins said since the item was already removed from the agenda it will have to be put on February's agenda to be voted on. Lyke asked for it to be put back on the Agenda for February. Councilman Harris asked that if this is already a Resolution, did it change, or are we just revisiting it due to the change in Government. He said the Resolution is already in effect for the Town of Big Stone Gap, so he thinks Council does not need a Resolution that is already in effect. Councilman Bloomer said a Resoltion like this opens the Town up to liability and asked if the Town decided not to enforce or to enforce the law would our insurance cover it. Vice-Mayor Gilley said it is showing support. Councilman Hughes said it seems to be political and was adopted previously. Councilman Harris said if citizens have any questions regarding the 2nd Amendment to refer them to the Resolution that was adopted in 2019. Councilman Bloomer said that Council took an oath to uphold the Constitution which means Council must obey all laws passed by Government. Mayor Johnson said if it was already adopted why do it again. Councilman Bloomer asked is there a reason to redo the Resolution. Attorney Bledsoe said there is no expiration date on a Resolution and once in effect, it is always in effect, unless overturned. Vice-Mayor Gilley said he is doing what citizens have asked for. Ms. Hawkins said again citizens need to refer to the 2019 adoption, and they can request a copy. Mayor Johnson asked could Council print something about the Resolution in the Post. Ms. Hawkins said if Council wants the Resoltion published in the Post she can have it in next week's edition.

Motion by Gilley, seconded by Lyke, that Council authorize printing Resolution 04-2026 – 2nd Amendment Sanctuary in The Post. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Gilley, Hollinger, Johnson, Lyke

Nayes: None

Abstain: Bloomer, Harris, Hughes

Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 11 - ADJOURNMENT

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

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes, Johnson, Lyke

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

Meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

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