

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

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

February 10, 2026

6:30 PM

AGENDA ITEM 1

Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice-Mayor Gilley called the meeting to order.

Council Present: Hon. Kent Gilley, Vice-Mayor
 Hon. Robert Bloomer, Councilman
 Hon. Adam Harris, Councilman
 Hon. W. Turk Hollinger, Councilman
 Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman

Council Absent: Hon. Gary Johnson, Mayor
 Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman

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 Bud Kilbourne and Associates Pastor Eddie Kilbourne of Cornerstone House of Prayer.

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 February 10, 2026 be approved as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

AGENDA ITEM 5 – COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

James Terrell, 476 Ridge Place, said he attended the January 2026 and found it to be the most interesting, informative, and involved council meeting he has attended and there were three items he wanted to discuss. He said that there was concerns regarding speeding and noise on town streets, discussion regarding the 2nd Amendment Sanctuary issue, and the county tax rate. He said all this ties into the inoperable vehicle issue, from a safety standpoint (children at play), an environmental standpoint (fluids, gasoline, oil, etc.), and also regarding the non-taxing of these vehicles. He asked that Jimmy McElrath be invited to next month's meeting to explain why the ordinance is not being enforced.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS (Continued)

Jeff Fleenor, 1728 Spring Ridge Road, came to ask Council to consider a playground project like the one Nick Saban done in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He said the park uses artificial turf and the playground is designed to look like the University of Alabama. He said they have special swings for kids in wheelchairs. He offered to help by a personal donation of \$2,000 to get away from the dirt and mulch. He said that there was a house fire in his neighborhood recently and the Fire Department had to use tanker trucks because there were no fire hydrants. He said that he knew there were plans to add water lines in the neighborhood and would like to have fire hydrants added to the project.

Tammy Creed, 28 Gilley Avenue East, came to Council to ask for a map or a blueprint on the sewer lines at her address. She said she had left several messages for Public Works and has had no return call. She said she needs to know where the tap is so she can get her sewer connected. Mr. Lawson said he would be at her address tomorrow.

Matt Bright, 324 Pearl Avenue East, came regarding the camping ordinance that is to be voted on tonight. He said he does not have a vote on the Planning Commission but is in charge of running the meeting and wanted to come to Council to say that there is a significant support system available for any person that could be affected by the passing of this Ordinance, and this was taken into consideration by the Planning Commission before sending the Ordinance to Council for a vote. He also said that Pearl Avenue is a one-way street and there is a sign posted that says No Through Traffic but there is an ongoing problem with speeding and traveling the wrong direction. He said there is a seventy-two-inch-wide speed table that is \$70 and asked if he purchased two of these could the Town install them.

Councilman Harris said there should be another Public Safety Committee meeting to address the inoperable vehicles and the Pearl Avenue concerns. Councilman Hollinger said the Public Safety Committee met and discussed the problems on Aviation Road and had some solutions. He agreed with Councilman Harris that they would schedule another meeting regarding the issues that were brought to Council's attention tonight. Councilman Harris and Councilman Hollinger said the Public Safety Meetings are also open to the Public. Ms. Hawkins said she would reach out next week with a date and get the meeting out for publication.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. **Approval of minutes of Council Workshop Meeting of January 06, 2026.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- b. **Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting of January 13, 2026.**
Recommended Action: Approve as presented.
- c. **Departmental Reports for the month of January 2026.**
Recommended Action: Received and filed.

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

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

AGENDA ITEM 7 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Matthew Lane reported that:

- The Lane Group has been here since March 1996. The Town of Big Stone Gap is our oldest client. The Lane Group became a part of RDA in January 2026; it is a larger firm and will allow more services for the Town. Jon Broskey decided to go to the public sector but will be staying on as a sub-consultant. RDA will be fully committed to Big Stone Gap and will be keeping the office on East 5th Street. Matthew Lane will be the project manager for the foreseeable future.
- Proctor Street sidewalk extension –VDOT has a very accelerated schedule to complete the project.
- East Stone Gap Utilities – close to finishing the design.
- Hospital Watershed – design has been completed. DEQ has some issues with the funding.

AGENDA ITEM 8 - TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**a. Ordinance 06-2026 – Camping and Sleeping in Public Areas**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 06-2026 being an Ordinance to regulate camping and sleeping in public areas within the Town of Big Stone Gap, Virginia .

Motion by Harris, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve Resolution 06-2026 being an Ordinance to regulate camping and sleeping in public areas within the Town of Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

b. Resolution 08-2026 – Re-appoint Greg Kress – BSG Housing Authority

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 08-2026 being a Resolution reappointing Greg Kress to a four-year term on the Big Stone Gap Housing Authority to expire on February 28, 2030.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that Council Resolution 08-2026 being a Resolution reappointing Greg Kress to a four-year term on the Big Stone Gap Housing Authority to expire on February 28, 2030. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

c. Resolution 09-2026 – Re-appoint Brian Jones – BSG Planning Commission

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve Resolution 09-2026 being a Resolution reappointing Brian Jones to a four-year term on the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to expire on February 28, 2030.

Motion by Bloomer, seconded by Hughes, that Council approve Resolution 09-2026 being a Resolution reappointing Brian Jones to a four-year term on the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission to expire on February 28, 2030. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

d. Resolution 10-2026 – Appointment to the Planning Commission

Mr. Lawson said Resolution 10-2026 was a Resolution asking Council for an appointment to the Planning Commission to fill the unexpired term vacated by Adam Harris on the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission, to expire October 31, 2029. There was a discussion regarding three candidates that are interested in serving.

Motion by Harris, seconded by Hollinger, that Council table Resolution 10-2026 being a Resolution for an appointment to the Planning Commission to fill the unexpired term vacated by Adam Harris on the Big Stone Gap Planning Commission, to expire October 31, 2029. Motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

e. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson gave the following updates:

- Jimmy McElrath gave these updates regarding the McNutt Garage: Mr. McNutt's first permit was denied for a detached garage; his second permit was approved for an attached garage with a breezeway no larger than 8ft off the house. Residential plans are not required unless the project is over 5,000 square feet. Permits max time is six months. The temporary building that is storing the materials for the addition project is in compliance for now. It was decided that if the neighbors are still in disagreement with the construction, it is a civil matter and their responsibility to file court proceedings.
- Jimmy McElrath stated that 208 E 9th Street N and West Main 5th Street properties are the only code violations that are open in Big Stone Gap. Mr. Lawson asked if a process of communication could be established between the Town and Mr. McElrath's office to notify the Town of any complaints or permits issued within the corporate limits.
- The arrangements for Margie Ann Lyke, Crystal Lyke's Grandmother will be Monday, February 16, 2026 from 5:00-7:00pm at Gilliam Funeral Home, the funeral service will follow, and the graveside service will be Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 2:00pm.
- There was an auto accident which involved the death of a local partner and developer of Big Stone Gap.
- There was an accident today where a meter reader hit and killed a dog. A Wise County Deputy responded and will get a copy of his report to Council.
- There was an accident at MECC and Big Stone Gap Police Department was asked to aide in a car chase ending in a standoff where the offender had a gun and committed suicide.
- There are some changes at the Water Department regarding persons/businesses that have been cut off for having ongoing large amounts owed. The customers have responded they had agreements in place, but the Town does not have any evidence of this. The customers have been asked to get payment plans signed and in writing. For the Town's larger buildings that use one meter for multiple users, a solution will be put in place to separate the water bills for each user.
- Will have estimates by the end of the week for the additions at the Skate Park.
- The right of entry documentation is being finalized for the sidewalk to connect the Library, the Museum and Bullitt Park. After that documentation is finalized VDOT can give the Town a timeline on the environmental, measurements and so forth to get this project started.

Projects Update (continued)

- Work should start before the next Council Meeting on the sidewalk for 2nd Street to 1st Street depending on weather.
- Speed safety signs have been ordered and anticipate arrival within the next six weeks.
- Recreation league basketball has started in the gym with six teams from ages 4-7.
- The audit process has been accelerated by switching from ClearPoint CPAs to Robinson Farmer Cox (RFC). We are working on a timeline to bring the audits up to date for funding purposes.
- Mural survey is out on socials and websites asking citizens what they would like to see in the mural at Miner's Park. Part of the funding requirement is for citizen input, so there will be meetings to get that completed. We have had a couple of renderings that we liked but we want the citizens' input. There is an application process that goes to artists all over the country by Round the Mountain and Friends of Southwest Virginia and has had good responses from all over the region.
- With school back in session, work on the Love sign has started again.

Councilman Bloomer asked what additions were being made to the Skate Park? Mr. Lawson said the connectivity to Bullitt Park, seating, fountains, shade sails, grass, landscaping and fencing.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Harris said in January he attended a warming shelter round table in Blountville, TN with the head of Wise County Social Services and the Virginia Health Department. He said there were also emergency management managers from other areas of Tennessee and Virginia. He said he talked to them about the need for a warming shelter in our area and was able to express many factors to what he calls "citizens that fell through the cracks". He said these people cannot go to a local shelter because they have a criminal history or a mental illness, but no matter the reason they are still a citizen. He said currently the only resource we have that goes along with the comprehensive plan is Family Crisis Services in Norton, but most of the time they are full. He said in Virginia we currently do not have a set standard or protocol for warming shelters, or shelters during emergency disasters. He said after attending the round table he learned that Virginia has it in the works to set up procedure and protocols for warming shelters. He thanked the Clergy, congregation at the Christ Episcopal Church and Councilman Hughes for opening their church doors during the frigid temperatures in January. He thanked the Public Works crew for the great job working the roads during the snow. He also thanked the first responders for keeping us safe and a thank you to the Town of Big Stone Gap for making it the best Town in the world.

Councilman Hughes thanked all the visitors that came out to the meeting, and he said there was a through line that was said during comments that people pay taxes for basic services, and it is important for us to keep that in mind as council members and as an organization. He thanked all the Town crews, particularly during the snow, a lot of hours were put in to keep citizens safe. He thanked the police, fire, rescue and all the staff of the Town.

Vice-Mayor Gilley thanked everyone and said it has been cold and we have had some issues, but the Town has taken care of everything very well. He thanked all the employees and everyone.

AGENDA ITEM 11 - ADJOURNMENT

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

Ayes: Bloomer, Gilley, Harris, Hollinger, Hughes

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Johnson, Lyke

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

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