

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

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

May 05, 2026

6:30 PM

AGENDA ITEM 1

Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order:

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

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

AGENDA ITEM 2 - REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of April 7, 2026 and the Regular Council Meeting of April 14, 2026.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Gretchen Cope

Gretchen Cope, Park Manager, Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park, thanked Council for letting her come and talk about The Gathering in the Gap, Saturday, May 23rd. She said they have a great event planned this year with Lonesome River Band, Dave Eggar, and Sister Sadie on the main stage starting at 6PM, the Acoustic Arbor Stage with WiseJAMS, Jim Lloyd and Now Playing, Roan Street Ramblers and The Lovely Mountaineers starting at 12PM. She said they have partnered up with the Mountain Artisan Woodcarvers and are doing a Camp and Carve at Jessie Lea RV Park with free shuttles all day. She said there will be a jam tent called Pickin' in the Gap, Pint-Size Pickers and children's activities. She thanked the Town for their involvement and support for the event. She said this event is all free except for the main stage.

AGENDA ITEM 4 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Stephen Lawson gave the Town Engineer Report in the absence of Matthew Lane.

- 100% plan for the sidewalk project on Proctor Street going into the park has been sent to VDOT with plans to get bids out in June.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – TOWN MANAGERS REPORT**AGENDA ITEM 5a – Proclamation Garden Week**

Mr. Lawson said this was a Proclamation designating June 1ST through June 7TH, 2026 as National Garden Week in Big Stone Gap.

AGENDA ITEM 5b – Proclamation Toby's Tops

Mr. Lawson said this will be a Proclamation welcoming Toby's Tops to Big Stone Gap located at 304 East 5th Street South, pending a lease agreement.

AGENDA ITEM 5c – Tour de Crackers Neck Funding Request

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

AGENDA ITEM 5d – MEOC Title 5 Program

Mr. Lawson said this was a request to approve the Town of Big Stone Gap to be a Host Agency for MEOC's Title 5 Program.

AGENDA ITEM 5e – Reassessment Impact on Real Estate Tax Rate

Mr. Lawson handed out information to Council regarding the Real Estate Assessments done by Wise County which makes the town eligible to increase by 1% without having a Public Hearing, if we keep our rate of .44 cents, which has been in effect since 2005, it takes the Town above the 1%. Mr. Lawson said with the increase in minimum wage coming and a cost of living raise to the employees the .44 cents would be needed for this increase and the rate cannot be decreased. Mr. Lawson recommended to Council to do the Public Hearing regarding the increase, Council agreed. Amanda Hawkins, Town Clerk Treasurer, stated she would publish a notice announcing the Public Hearing regarding maintaining the .44 cents and to be held May 19th at 6:30 pm.

AGENDA ITEM 5f - Projects Update

Mr. Lawson gave the following updates:

- Amler – RFP Draft will begin.
- Kid's Fishing Day had a great turnout and everyone that attended had a lot of fun.
- Great American Cleanup was good but weather impacted the event.
- Title V Program – Town would get a participant in the program for 20 hours a week for training and they can be used in any department.
- Skate Park has two areas in need of concrete and asphalt for parking, weather permitting this should be completed for the Grand opening scheduled May 16th at 12PM. The Park is closed due to construction but while Mr. Lawson was at the skate park he had two people from Bristol and four from Wytheville stop by wanting to use the park.
- Fraley Park – the walking trail has been resurfaced, and the fencing needs to be completed.
- Bullitt Park – fencing project quote was \$40K but went to Lowe's and purchased fencing at a considerably less price and with repurposing the old poles the cost will be \$10K.
- Post Office – moving to the new site at the end of May, the Town will be working with GSA to finalize the transfer of the Federal building to the Town the 2nd week of June.

AGENDA ITEM 5f - Projects Update (continued)

- Bridge inspections were received from Mattern and Craig. The Short Street bridge in good condition and the Proctor Street is in fair condition with a two-year period to get the repairs completed.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Commission did not meet last night and has been rescheduled for Monday May 11th.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Hughes said the DePaul Community Services anniversary is being celebrated tomorrow. He thanked all the employees, fire and rescue.

Councilman Harris thanked all the first responders and said hopefully next year try to have the Great American Clean up and Kid's Fishing Day on separate days.

Councilman Bloomer said Gap Partnership put in an application for a grant, and it looks good. He said Fraley Park looks good, and he and Elise are going to purchase new flags for the disc golf baskets. He said the Park still needs fencing for the young kids.

Vice-Mayor Gilley thanked all the employees and said Kids' Fishing Day went well. He thanked Stephen Lawson, Parks and Rec, the Police Department for all their help and Councilman Bloomer for bringing vouchers to 404 Café and Creamery.

Mayor Johnson thanked all the employees and said Kids' Fishing Day was fantastic even with the rain.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned 7:50 pm.

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