

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

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

May 12, 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 L. Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
 Mr. Matt Russell, Chief of Police

Staff Absent: Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney

AGENDA ITEM 2 - INVOCATION by Reverend Ray Moore of Christ Episcopal Church.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ITEM 4 - ADOPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

Motion by Harris, seconded by Bloomer, that the agenda for the Regular Council Meeting of May 12, 2026 be approved as presented. Motion resulted as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 5 – COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Tyler McFarland, Assistant Principal, UHS came to thank Council and the Town Staff for the Prom Promise week events. The VCU crew cancelled and our Police Department made the event happen and Monday the Town did the drunk driving event. He thanked Council and the Town again for always stepping up and helping UHS.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - GENERAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**a. Approval of minutes of Regular Council Meeting of April 07, 2026.****Recommended Action: Approve as presented.****b. Departmental Reports for the month of April 2026.****Recommended Action: Received and filed.**

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

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

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 7 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Matthew Lane reported that:

- System Wide Water Loss Improvements Project Phase III has been designed and is waiting on a parity review from Rural Development and the Town audit need completion so that VRA can approve advertising that Project.
- The Ballard Hospital Sewer Shed Improvements Project is ready with completion of the survey and will start preliminary design, also this project needs the completion of the audit.
- The East Stone Gap Comprehensive Improvements design is completed and is under a QAQC review and are hoping to have it out by the end of the week for approval with hopes to start advertising next month.
- Proctor Street Sidewalk plans are 100% complete with advertisement to start in July with a 6–8-month construction schedule.
- Sunrise Villages preliminary design are completed, and hydraulics will start this week with plans being submitted to VDH by next Council Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – TOWN MANAGERS REPORT**AGENDA ITEM 8a – PROCLAMATION – Garden Week**

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve a proclamation designating June 1st through June 7th, 2026 as National Garden Week in Big Stone Gap.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Hollinger, that Council approve a proclamation designating June 1st through June 7th, 2026 as National Garden Week in Big Stone Gap. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 8b – PROCLAMATION – Toby's Tops

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve a proclamation welcoming Albert Surratt owner of Toby's Tops, LLC located at 304 5th Street South in Big Stone Gap.

After discussion by Council that Toby's Tops had not secured the location, the Motion failed to carry.

AGENDA ITEM 8c – Tour de Crackers Neck Funding Request

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve a donation of \$350 to the Tour de Crackers Neck bike race.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a donation of \$350 to the Tour de Crackers Neck bike race. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 8d – MEOC Title V Program

Mr. Lawson asked Council to approve the Town of Big Stone Gap to become a Host Agency for the Senior Community Service Employment Program through Mountain Empire Older Citizens.

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Harris, that Council approve the Town of Big Stone Gap to become a host Agency for the Senior Community Service Employment Program through Mountain Empire Older Citizens. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 8e – Projects Update

- There was a progress meeting today with AMLER regarding the RFP for the Big Cherry Project. There is some budget work to be done on soft costs with hopes to get it out for bid in July.
- Skate Park Grand Opening is Saturday May 16th at 11AM. It is graduation weekend and Council was asked to spread the word. There will be giveaways - bikes (all sizes), skateboards, scooters, and safety equipment and there will be freestyle riders in attendance to perform various stunts and tricks.
- Working with Union High School to get a solution for the replacement of the reserve seating for football games and the resurfacing of the track in June before July 4th and pricing for the triple jump.
- Quotes on cutting dead tree branches that are above the treehouses in Bullitt Park, the Park will need to shut down to get this completed.
- Reminder that Gathering in the Gap is May 23rd.
- Speed signs are here and have been assembled. Looking for the best locations to have them installed.
- Excess equipment is getting ready for sale.
- Councilwoman Lyke asked will the seats be out all year round, Mr. Lawson answered yes. Councilwoman Lyke said it was an issue of them being broken due to vandalism. Mr. Lawson said they were checking on different prototypes and checking the durability of them. Councilwoman Lyke said to consider security cameras to protect the investment. Councilman Harris said with the prototype shown to Council the mesh backing may need to be pressure washed, he also asked if the old seats could be put on the government bid site and sell them. Mr. Lawson said yes but condition is a question. Tyler McFarland asked the mayor if he could speak and answer his previous question to Mr. Lawson on price, Mayor Johnson said yes. Mr. McFarland said with the game tickets going up in price the

AGENDA ITEM 8e – Projects Update (continued)

ticket price may raise to \$95 per seat. Councilman Harris asked Mr. McFarland had the school considered doing reserved parking. Mr. McFarland said it had been discussed but they do not have the manpower but will take it into consideration.

- Councilman Bloomer asked if the speed limit signs were solar powered. Mr. Lawson said yes. Councilman Bloomer also asked if they were heavy. Mr. Lawson said not as heavy as expected. Councilman Bloomer asked if they could use a sleeve with a latch at ground level. Mr. Lawson said they thought about a sleeve, but it would probably get covered up and have to use a metal detector to find it.
- Councilwoman Lyke said the Garden Club meets every 3rd Monday at the Country Club or usually meet at the Visitors Center the 1st week of June. She said to let her know when Council wanted to present the Proclamation.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Gilley said the Planning Commission met and sent both requests for the Crematorium and the Walmart subdivision to Council to set a Joint Public Hearing. He asked Council if these items were ready to be sent to a Public Hearing. Matthew Bright, Administrator for the Planning Commission said B2 allows for single family homes and there would be no rezoning. He said Council and the Planning Commission are approving the development of the land as a subdivision and Wise County Zoning will do individual inspections for each building.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a Joint Public Hearing on June 9th at 6:30PM for the preliminary plat for the Walmart subdivision. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

Motion by Harris, seconded by Bloomer, that Council approve a Joint Public Hearing on July 7th at 6:30PM for Holding Funeral Home Crematorium. Motion resulted as follows:

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

Nayes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Harris thanked Reverend Moore and the town crews.

Councilman Hollinger thanked the Police Department and the Town employees. He said it was nice to have DePaul Community Resources here in Big Stone Gap.

Councilwoman Lyke thanked Tyler McFarland for his positive report and for his speaking so highly of the BSG Police Department. She reminded Council of the Gathering in the Gap Saturday, May 23rd, and said it is a good thing for the Community, inexpensive, that supports local talent.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION (continued)

Councilman Hughes said the DePaul Community Resources ceremony was a nice event, encouraging we live in a region where we have families that are struggling, it's encouraging to see so many people and organizations that are dedicated to make life better particularly for children who end up in the foster system. He thanked all the visitors that came and a special thank you to Mr. McFarland, said it is always encouraging to see someone who is young, in a leadership position who does a lot of great things for our school and community. He thanked the Police, Fire and Ambulance and all the town employees. He said he hopes to see everyone out for the Grand Opening of the Skate Park and the Gathering in the Gap and said congratulations to all the local graduates.

Vice-Mayor Gilley thanked all the employees and said he was looking forward to the Grand Opening of the Skate Park and the Gathering in the Gap. He reminded everyone of the Joint Public Hearing next Tuesday at 6:30PM.

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone and wanted to mention that Gathering in the Gap is a free event except for the main stage and he asked everyone to pass that along. He thanked all the employees and the town crews and said to congratulate Adam Harris for being Employee of the Month at Food City. He also thanked Mr. Lawson and Ms. Hawkins for all that they do.

AGENDA ITEM 11 - ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Nays: None Abstain: None Absent: None

Meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

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