TOWN OF BIG STONE GAP, VIRGINIA
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING

COUNCIL CHAMBERS
505 E 5TH STREET S
BIG STONE GAP, VA **September 01, 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 Minutes of the Council Workshop Meeting of August 04, 2026, and the Regular Council Meeting of August 11, 2026.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT
In absence of Matthew Lane, Stephen Lawson, Town Manager, gave the Town Engineer's Report.

- A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for September 16 at 10:00AM regarding the Proctor Street sidewalk project.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – TOWN MANAGERS REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 4a – Parade Permit – Veteran's Day Parade
Mr. Lawson stated that this permit is for Council's approval of the Veteran's Day Parade scheduled for November 07, 2026 at 11AM.

AGENDA ITEM 4b – Proclamation – Triple Play Cards
Mr. Lawson stated that this proclamation is to recognize and welcome Triple Play Cards located at 319 Shawnee Avenue East to Big Stone Gap.

AGENDA ITEM 4c – Resolution 17-2026 – Re-Appoint John Morrissey
Mr. Lawson stated that this resolution is to re-appoint John Morrissey to the BSG Housing Authority for a four-year term to expire June 30, 2030.

AGENDA ITEM 4d – Resolution 18-2026 – Special Use Permit

Mr. Lawson stated that this resolution is asking Council to authorize the Special Use Permit for the operation of a crematorium facility at 17 E 3rd Street N with the following additional conditions, as authorized in Article 6, Section 5.2(F) of the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Big Stone Gap as follows:

i. *The building containing the crematory equipment shall not be altered in a way that significantly detracts from the historic architectural nature of the building, apart from necessary equipment and appurtenances for the operations of said equipment and;*
ii. *The crematorium shall not be operated in a manner that does not violate the provisions of the Public Nuisance Ordinance (Section 13.10), and the Noise Ordinance (Article XI) of the Town of Big Stone Gap and;*
iii. *the crematorium be operated, utilizing the specific crematory equipment detailed in the submitted Special Use Permit Application, specifically the American Crematory Equipment Company's Model "A-200" and;*
iv. *No signage indicating the operation of the crematorium may be installed on the exterior of the building.*

AGENDA ITEM 4e – Outstanding Police Work Commendations

Mr. Lawson said this is commendations for the Big Stone Gap Police Officers and that this will be done quarterly and for other departments as well.

AGENDA ITEM 4f - Projects Update

Mr. Lawson gave the following updates:

- Mr. Lawson, David Long and Abe Quesenberry met at the Isaiah 11 property/house in the Valley that was donated by Mr. Absher. The Town will be donating help with water lines and meters associated with the site.
- The skate park fencing is approximately 75% complete. Remaining improvements include the shelter and water fountain.
- Discussions were held with the Division of Water Quality and Breaks Interstate Park regarding the floating dock at Big Cherry which will be installed before the end of the year.
- There will be a meeting on September 10th with Virginia Energy and VDOT to secure the procurement of the bridge project that connects the Town with Applachia.
- The mailboxes have been returned to the Federal Building. Installation will take place once the redesign work is completed.
- An issue was noted regarding Amazon packages being placed on the loading dock at the Federal building. The Town is not going to move the packages so not to be liable and has left it up to the Post Office and Amazon to work it out.
- Mountain Empire Home Craft Days and Mountain Artisan events were both scheduled to take place at the same time. It was noted that the Mountain Artisan permit was submitted because Mountain Empire was out of space but that was not the case, so the Town has left it with the appropriate parties regarding the overlapping events and permitting.

AGENDA ITEM 4f - Projects Update (continued):

- Mr. Lawson handed out some information regarding research on e-bikes for Council to read and review. This information comes from questions back and forth from Roanoke, Abingdon, and law enforcement with the purpose of not banning e-bikes but to make them safe on the greenbelt.
- There were public concerns regarding the Flock Safety camera system and a group wanted to come next week to the Council meeting to make their concerns known to Council. Mr. Lawson gave the following information regarding the cameras for Council: From February 01, 2026 through July 31, 2026 approximately 20 searches were documented, reportedly related to matters such as theft, kidnapping, and domestic incidents. The Town has one license plate reader, and it cannot be accessed by any other department, and a case number must be provided for access. It was noted that there are four other basic cameras, similar to a Ring doorbell camera, intended for public protection. Council discussed both the privacy concerns and public-safety benefits associated with the camera system, including the importance of protecting constitutional rights while recognizing the potential benefits to the community.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Gilley said The Planning Commission had a special meeting August 25th regarding stipulations for the Special Use Permit for the crematorium at Holding Funeral Home. The Planning Commission's recommendations and documentation has been sent to Council for them to review before next week's Council meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Harris discussed a project on the Greenbelt involving a Halloween display and a competition for decorations and a theatre club that could do a spooky greenbelt. Mr. Lawson stated they had tried this in the past and had no participation. Councilman Bloomer gave Councilman Harris a contact name of a business owner in town, and they were also interested in something for the Fall Season. Councilman Harris said it had been brought to his attention that Gilley Avenue was dangerous due to speeding, and a request had been made that one of the speed signs be placed there.

Councilwoman Lyke expressed appreciation to Mr. Lawson for the updates regarding e-bikes. She noted that she was in favor of the cameras and they have been in use for some time and emphasized the importance of protection/public safety. She thanked everyone for everything they do for the Town.

Councilman Hughes said he attended the Destination Southwest Virginia meeting today that was held at the High Knob Destination Center. He said it was a group effort to draft a tourism proposal for the next decade for Southwest Virginia. He said one of the points spoken of was how funds from Federal was released to Clinch District to repair Forest Service sites throughout our territory, but the funding has been held up or never been received. He said at the City of Norton's last meeting a resolution was passed formally asking the Federal Legislature and the State Legislature

to get involved to make sure that the money gets to Southwest Virginia for trail repairs and maintenance for the Forest Service, and suggested Council do the same. He thanked all the fire, police, EMS and town employees.

Vice Mayor Gilley said he was glad a building for the ladder truck was in process. He thanked all the employees.

Mayor Johnson thanked all the town crews. He said he got a comment regarding the Aviation Road Speed limit signs and was asked that one be moved closer to the entrance to Aviation by the Park. He said he also agrees that cameras are necessary for the safety of the public. He also thanked all the town employees for everything they do.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – CLOSED SESSION

Motion by Lyke, seconded by Harris, that Council enter a Closed Session in accordance with Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(7) for consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body; and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

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

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyke, that Council reconvene into Open Session.

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

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED SESSION

Amanda Hawkins, Clerk Treasurer, read the Certification of Closed Session and called for a roll call vote resulting as follows:

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

AGENDA ITEM 8 - ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned 7:27 pm.

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