

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

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

June 06, 2023

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. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor
Hon. Robert Bloomer, Councilman
Hon. Kent Gilley, Councilman
Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman

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

Council Absent: Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

AGENDA ITEM 2

JOINT PUBLIC HEARING – Special Use Permit – Donna Kinsler

Mayor Johnson Recessed the Council Meeting for Roll Call of the Planning Commission.

Planning Commission Present: Mr. Allen Morris – Chairman
Mr. Lorenzo Rodriguez – Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Freda Bishop – Member
Mr. Kent Gilley – Member
Ms. Amy Hubbard – Member
Mr. John Morrissey – Member
Mr. Matthew Bright, Administrator

Planning Commission Absent: Mr. Greg Kress, Member
Mr. Mark Lester, Member
Vacant – David Gibson, Deceased

Once the Planning Commission quorum was confirmed Mayor Johnson opened the Joint Public Hearing for the Special Use Permit and called for comments from the public.

Matthew Bright, Planning Commission Coordinator, stated the prerequisites in accordance with the Town of Big Stone Gap's ordinance had been met and all state and local regulations must be met. The County has issued a certificate of occupancy for the building.

Mayor Johnson closed the Joint Public Hearing for the Special Use Permit.

AGENDA ITEM 3 PUBLIC HEARING – Ordinance 08-2023 – FY2023-2024 Budget

Mayor Johnson opened the Public Hearing for the Ordinance 08-2023 – FY2023-2024 Budget and called for comments from the public.

No comments from the public were made.

Mayor Johnson closed the Public Hearing for the Ordinance 08-2023 – FY2023-2024 Budget and reconvened the Council Workshop.

AGENDA ITEM 4 REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop of May 2, 2023, Public Utilities Committee Meeting of May 8, 2023, Budget Finance Audit Committee of May 8, 2023, and the Regular Council Meeting of May 9, 2023. Mayor Johnson stated that if Council had any changes to inform the Town Treasurer, Amanda Hawkins.

AGENDA ITEM 5 TOWN ENGINEER'S REPORT

Greenbelt Phase V

Mr. Broskey said the contractors are waiting on the bridge to come in, estimated time is November 2023. The path has been seeded and straw put down to prepare for stone and asphalt in the next few months.

Big Cherry Trails

Mr. Broskey said trail work is complete and the contractor is working on signage and the installation of trash cans.

System Wise Water Loss Phase 1A, 1B and 2

Mr. Broskey said we had submitted our plans to Rural Development for their comments and review. Rural Development sent in their changes and recommendations, and they have been addressed. We need to work on our interim finances and advertise this project this summer.

East Stone Gap Comprehensive Utility Improvements Project

Mr. Broskey said Lenowisco completed the application and submitted it to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD). It will take approximately six months to get a response.

AGENDA ITEM 6**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT****a. Proclamation – National Garden Week**

Mr. Lawson reported that the local Dogwood Garden Club met at the Visitors Center where a picture was taken, and the ladies gave a flower to the Town of Big Stone Gap for the Proclamation. The Club also sponsored a dinner celebrating their 60th Anniversary on May 22, 2023, at the Lonesome Pine Country Club, some Council members attended the dinner, which was an amazing event. The Club is partnering with the Trail of Lonesome Pine for their 60th Anniversary to plant flowers purchased by the Trail at the June Tolliver Playhouse. The bench donated by the club a year ago is ready to be placed in the Town, we will be looking at locations for this placement.

b. Proclamation – Big Stoned Hydroponics welcomed Big Stoned Hydroponics

Mr. Lawson welcomed the new CBD store Big Stoned Hydroponics to the Town of Big Stone Gap.

c. Resolution 06-2023 – Special Use Permit

Mr. Lawson stated that he was glad the Certificate of Occupancy had been issued by Wise County for Little Bear Daycare. This will definitely address a need for our area.

d. Ordinance 08-2023 – FY 2023-2024 Budget

Mr. Lawson informed Council this ordinance was to adopt the proposed FY 2023-2024 Budget.

e. Council Workshop – July 4, 2023

Mr. Lawson requested that the July 4, 2023 Council Worship be cancelled due to Holiday.

f. Parade Permit – July 4th

Mr. Lawson said we will ask Council to approve the Parade Permit for the July 4th parade.

g. Projects Update

Mr. Lawson stated that the trail system on Big Cherry will be expanded. We have met with the Forestry Department to do some controlled burns to widen the road and make it fire safe. The Virginia Outdoors Federation awarded the town \$150,000 from their preservation trust fund which is 100% of the request we sent in for Big Cherry Lake. We got this award through Friends of Southwest Virginia. These funds will be used for the boat ramp and fishing pier. This award will go along with the Amler funds, the only problem is the two-year period starts July 5, 2023, and we do not know if the Amler funds will be available that quickly. We will figure out how to use this money on these two portions of this project. Kids Fishing Day was great with lots of happy kids. Mr. Lawson said that Gathering in the Gap was on the same day and was a very successful event with approximately 2,200 people in attendance.

Mr. Lawson said we also received a \$25,000 grant from RAPHA for the development of the Tyler Flanary Bike and Skate Park. This takes the awards that the community has raised plus outside sources totaling right at \$90,000. We originally had \$100,000 from the Town, and with Spearhead Trails we got \$18,963 that has already gone into the planning of this project. We are working on the construction part of the project with \$380,100 from ARC for a total of \$586,973 for this project. We will be asking for a design build construction management resolution to put into our town documents, where to allow us to work with professional bike and skate park planners on the design and construction of this facility. We will need to be around \$800,000 total funding for this project.

Mr. Lawson said that the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) awarded us \$155,000 for the Police Department through their ARPA Funds the state of Virginia received to purchase various police equipment.

Mr. Lawson said Thursday we had 30 people from the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities Coalition in town that come from coal communities

across the US to visit sites where Virginia Energy has used former mining sites for new purposes. They started in Bristol at the Sessions Hotel and ended in Big Stone Gap at the Visitor's Center with a panel discussion of what we have done here. We asked each restaurant in Town to send a specialty plate to the Visitor's Center for lunch, so the Coalition could have a taste of Big Stone Gap rather than cater from one restaurant.

Mr. Lawson said that Parks and Recreation have the Frog Level baseball fields ready. They have improved the drainage and will begin setting telephone poles to attached netting to for the backstops. On the roadside there will be aluminum arms to extend netting to help protect traffic and the Greenbelt Trail from foul balls.

Mr. Lawson said the Union Little League group is doing great and has been awarded the 10-12 All-Star Regional Tournament this weekend, beginning of Friday and ending next Wednesday.

Mr. Lawson said the basketball courts are getting equipment and the work has begun on the 100 x 60 fenced area with an 86 x 50 high school regulation basket court and 2 pickleball courts across those courts. An additional two pickleball courts will be striped outside the fenced in area.

Mr. Lawson said we got bids for a new mower; Cox Tractor was the lowest bid.

Mr. Lawson said lights have been put up along the road in at the back of Bullitt Park where the basketball courts are located.

Mr. Lawson said the Harvest Host pad had been poured and we do have water and sewer at this site that most do not have. We are pricing the cost to add electricity to this one site.

Mr. Lawson said the Italy Bottom water fountain has been installed with a handicap ramp and parking spot as well.

Mr. Lawson said we were talking to a company in Texas, that does governmental bathrooms, about three portable bath and shower structures at Italy Bottom Park, Frog Level Park, and the Soccer Field. Depending on the pricing we may include one at the back of Bullitt Park.

Mr. Lawson said we were pricing a paving roller that uses different material that does not have to be kept as hot. We have had to rent rollers in past. Boyd's Construction is letting us use one they own and do not use any longer, if we can use it, we will purchase it from Boyd's to do some of the patching ourselves rather than contracting that work out.

Mr. Lawson said the deadline for filing to be on the ballot in November for Town Council election is 7 pm on June 20, 2023.

Mr. Lawson said that Karen Ferguson, also known as the Redneck Princess, and Tim Honeycutt will be retiring June 30. We will have a luncheon on June 28, 2023 to show appreciation for their years of working for the town.

Mr. Lawson said Britalians TV was in Big Stone Gap doing their first part, spring documentary. They attended all our events.

Mr. Lawson said the Juneteenth Celebration at Italy Bottom Park will be on Monday, June 19th.

Mr. Lawson said that five certified letters had been sent out regarding issues of high grass and different zoning complaints.

Mr. Lawson said that CBD items, such as what is sold at Southwest Virginia LTD, Big Stoned Hydroponic and the Smokey Grass Station are being looked at and the method of how they operate verses what is allowed. He said we would ask the Planning Commission and Council to research ordinances and consider limiting the number of these establishments we would allow within our district legally.

Mr. Lawson said that tank maintenance proposals from 2 companies with different processes have gone through with our engineers. In the different proposals we found the one we want to go with and want to get done before winter. Tanks can be rehabilitated then we are good for another 30 years. There would be significant savings with the second company we met with over the first company. We have 14 tanks in the system.

Mr. Lawson said he would be out of town next week for vacation therefore he would not be at the Regular Council meeting.

Mr. Lawson said the event in Washington DC for National Police Week and Memorial Service was a great event.

Councilman Bloomer asked Mr. Lawson if there was a plan for Big Stone Gap pool to reopen or are we abandoning it. Mr. Lawson said yes, he would recommend abandoning it, or we will have to put \$2-3 million into a new pool. The final decision will be open to Councils' discretion.

Mr. Lawson said with state promotions for Matthew Bright and him being unavailable, we are looking to Wise County and Jimmy McElrath to handle zoning, as well as the permitting for the Town. Mr. Michael Hatfield, County Administrator, agreed we could try doing both. Mr. Lawson recommended keeping Matthew Bright on retainer, which is in our best interest for the future even though there may be a fee for Wise County to handle both permitting and zoning. Councilman Bloomer stated residents pay county

taxes so why do we need to negotiate a price/cost for the County to handle the zoning. Mr. Lawson agreed that was a good point.

AGENDA ITEM 7 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Hughes said at the May 23rd meeting of the Art Committee a site visit to the LOVE sign location was made. The next mural in town at Miners Park will be a traceable image that will allow us to have a Community Art Day where people can come and paint the mural and then have it transferred onto the building. The total cost will be \$13,263 of which \$10,084 is for the material, plus labor and supplies.

AGENDA ITEM 8 COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilman Gilley bragged on Kids Fishing Day and thanked the Police Department and Parks and Recreation for their help. The Britalians TV were there filming, and they ate their first smores, it was a great event. He thanked 404 Café and Creamery for donating the hot dog wieners. He also thanked the town employees for all they do.

Councilman Hughes said that the Southwest Virginia Economic Forum, May 24th and 25 at University of Virginia's at Wise was a great event, and great compliments were given when you say you are from Big Stone Gap. All the way up to the governor's office. Gathering in the Gap was great. A big thank you to the town crews who helped at that event. Britalians TV were there and some other folks from the UK (United Kingdom). Mr. Huges said he had heard nothing but good comments about the Italy Bottom improvements. Thanks to all our Police, Fire, and Town employees; everything looks great.

Councilwoman Lyke said it was great to have Adriana Trigiani in for Gathering in the Gap for a book signing, it brought people from New Jersey and a lot of other areas. She is glad to see the town grow. Adriana was very impressed with how the town was coming along.

Vice-Mayor Nancy Bailey said that Gathering in the Gap was a fantastic event and that Tyler Hughes as Master of Ceremony, did a great job. She thanked all the town employees for their help with the Gathering in the Gap event.

Mayor Johnson thanked Parks and Recreation, Police, Water Crew, and the Sanitation Crew for their hard work. He also said that the Italy Bottom community was very pleased with the work that has been done at the park.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:49 pm.

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