



GATE CITY TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
October 21, 2025
156 East Jackson St., Gate City, VA 24251
6:30 PM

I. PUBLIC HEARING MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:42 PM By: Mayor, Jamie Lawson

II. ROLL CALL – Town Clerk, Kristie Tipton

	PRESENT	ABSENT
Mayor, Jamie Lawson	X	
Vice Mayor, Kevin Barnett	X	
Council Member, Allen Dougherty	X	
Council Member, Wallace W. Ross, Jr.	X	
Council Member, Pat Elliott	X	
Council Member, Dexter Harmon	X	
Town Manager, Greg Jones	X	
Town Attorney, Michele Brooks	X	

Others present: Courtney McCulley; Dorinda Bradshaw; Mike Still, Kingsport Times News; Gayle Cleek; Scott Cleek; Bettie Barger; John Barger; Evan Crawford; Anna Barnett; Gabriel Edmunds, Scott Co. Virginia Star; Steve Williams; Cindy Williams; Buffy McMillian; Harold Willis; Vickie Roberts; Steve Adkins; Connie Adkins; Judy Vicars

III. NEW BUSINESS

1. Zoning Ordinance Amendment: allow 'Tiny Homes' in R1 and R2 zoning districts
Motion made to

Motion by:

2nd by:

VOTE: Aye:

Nay:

Absent:

Abstain:

****Take No Action***

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Vickie Roberts – It's my understanding that the structure cannot be a yard barn that's just been made into a Tiny Home. It does in fact have to be wired and plumbed.

Mayor Lawson suggested the Council hold a Workshop on this matter before a vote is made.

Steve Williams – Mr. Mayor, I would like to say a few words because I may not be here when you have your next meeting. I just happen to be involved in that property at 211 Benton Drive. It's been in my family ever since it was built in 1963. This summer somebody came in, it's a general

partnership, (inaudible...) Just all of a sudden, they started bringing machines in and leveling things out and then they were gone, like for weeks. Then they came back...they have a big mound of dirt in the back, and there's what I say to be property boundary stakes. Wooden stakes with pink ribbon on it – I always associate that with property stakes. They're building two (2) structures there. They may not be classified as Tiny Homes, but they're, what they are, are yard barns. There's two (2) of them. Foundations have been dug out for them to go side by side.

I came to talk to the Mayor or Town Manager about and he said it was really just conjecture because I can't prove they're too close to the property line. Although I can visually look and if those stakes are determined to be property lines, they're probably four (4) feet back and it has to be ten (10) ... at the end of the block, or whatever. What I'm trying to get at is, those are not regular houses. They're called log barns. I don't know how they got the permits, or if they got permits, or who approved them to build to set where they're set.

Town Manager – They did get permits; they are properly permitted.

Steve Williams – Okay, and I assume everybody knew what they're putting out there.

Town Manager – Our Planning Commission did review it. We knew exactly what's going on up there.

Steve Williams – Okay, so we're going to allow multiple garage barns...

Town Manager – I don't know that it's a garage barn, Sir. The image I used on the map I showed you was one I got off the internet just to use as a reference. It was permitted at 10 feet setback, just like the ordinance states, and that's what it was permitted for.

Steve Williams – Is somebody checking on that?

Town Manager – We don't do that, Sir.

Steve Williams – You told me the only thing we could do is if they violate the Town Ordinance – you have to wait until they put a wall up and then you could...

Town Manager – You'd have to be able to prove it and now it's basically "you think it is" and that's not proof enough.

Steve Williams – I mean, to let somebody put a wall up, and then knock it down, to me is...I mean it looks like something could be done prior to that because they've got a lot of money in it.

A discussion began between Vice-Mayor Kevin Barnett; Greg Jones, Town Manager; and Michele Brooks, Town Attorney, as to what part the Planning Commission plays in making their decisions. They do not decide what kind of building they can build; that's more for the building inspector. We make sure of where the placement on the property is.

Steve Williams – so these are not classified as Tiny Homes?

Town Manager – No. They're classified as a regular home.

Steve Williams – Okay. Well, as far as Tiny Homes go, uh I do have concerns about those. I guess the number one (1) concern that everybody has is bringing down property value in existing neighborhoods, the cohesiveness, and the aesthetics of the existing neighborhoods. It could also have the issue if they're done by a general partnership or a business type situation instead of somebody who'll live there; we could get a transient population. As for the Town's side, there's aging utilities and if you start putting multiple Tiny Homes on these lots, you're having to connect utilities. It's probably not going to be as good as a tax base as what a regular home would be.

They're going to use the same utilities, the same trash pickup, the same community policing that you would have to support normal residential houses.

Dexter Harman – Back to the Tiny Home, there has to already be a house there, and gave an example. There's just not gonna be tiny homes.

Steve Williams – I appreciate the Council's time, and I appreciate the Council looking at that as they look at the Tiny Homes and if I appear argumentative, I apologize.

Mayor Lawson – Does anybody, yes Ma'am, come on up.

Bettie Barger – If they've already started, who signed off on it? Did you all?

Town Manager – Our Planning Commission reviewed all of that and I signed off on the permit as it fit our Code.

Bettie Barger – You signed off on it.

Town Manager – Yes, Ma'am.

Bettie Barger – So the Council was not aware?

Town Manager – they don't have to 'cause it's already in Code. It was handled and permitted through Code.

Bettie Barger – Who handles it through permitting and Code?

Town Manager – I do. I am the zoning administrator for the town.

Bettie Barger – So you signed off on it. but nobody else knew anything about it.

Town Manager – Yes, Ma'am.

Bettie Barger – But nobody else knew anything about it.

Town Manager – No, Ma'am. It went through our Planning Commission went through all of that.

Mayor Lawson – It has to go through the Planning Commission, and then it comes to him and they sign off on it. It doesn't come to us (Council).

Attorney Brooks – Unless it requires a Special Exception & Use Permit (where they're asking something that is outside of our zoning ordinance).

Bettie Barger – So in other words, if we have another lot that somebody wants to put a Tiny Home, or whatever, they have to see you, Sir. Is that correct?

Town Manager – Yes. That's the way it normally starts, yes Ma'am.

Mayor Lawson – Just a minute, Sir. And your name?

Scott Cleek – Do you ever have joint meetings with the Planning Commission and with Town Council and Mayor?

Mayor Lawson – No.

Town Manager – We haven't in a while, no.

Scott Cleek – ... (inaudible) maybe a combined group together.

Town Attorney – It might be a good thing for this Workshop.

Mayor Lawson – As far as the Workshop goes, but the Planning Commission handles totally different things than what we handle. Unless it's the Special Exemption and stuff. I mean, it's a good idea.

Scott Cleek – Yes, Sir. I was on it for years. We used to have joint meetings, and it helped a little bit. I'm just trying to offer a suggestion. Is anyone on the Council on the Planning Commission too?

Vice-Mayor Barnett – I am on the Planning Commission.

Council Member Elliott – I have a question. Did anybody from Vance Partnership meet with the Planning Commission?

Town Manager – Yes, Sir. Twice.

Council Member Elliott – they did? Okay.

Mayor Lawson – And that's the people doing that up on Benton Drive.

Town Manager – Right, correct.

Mayor Lawson – Mrs. Williams, Cindy...

Cindy Williams – I just have one question. My question is, will we allow the ones to continue on Benton Drive before you make a decision? Because they are very close to the line.

Mayor Lawson – I think as far as the permitting and everything goes it's been through the Planning Commission. Is that correct?

Town Manager – Yes, it's already been done, approved, and signed off on.

Cindy Williams – But is someone going to go check and see how close to the line it is?

Town Manager – It hasn't been built yet, Ma'am.

Cindy Williams – The footers are there, and they're putting the block there. So, if your block is down you're going to build on top of the block. That's the way my house was built, anyway.

Town Attorney – they're given permission to do it within the parameters what they have outlined for the town. It's very specific what they're granted permission to do. So they're supposed to comply with that. If not that's something we...

Cindy Williams – Well that's what I'm saying. Will someone go check that? Who is supposed to check that, and make sure they're within that...

Town Manager – Okay, Ma'am. I'll get ahold of the property, it's a little unusual do it that way, but I'll get hold of the property owner and I'll meet with him, and we'll go out and measure it okay?

Cindy Williams – That would be wonderful. I do appreciate that, thank you.

Mayor Lawson – Anyone else have... Ms. Roberts...

Vickie Roberts – I just want to add something. For the Tiny Houses, this is just to go back to the Planning Commission, while I've been sitting here, for a Tiny House on the property with another

home, I think they should have to pay their own utilities and everything because I have Airb&b's and each one of those has a separate account for water and trash pickup.

Town Manager – We do that with everybody. If they are two (2) separate structures they're considered 2 structures for billing.

Vickie Roberts – I just want to make sure it's listed with the Planning Commission for Tiny Homes.

Town Manager – Well that's done as policy, Ma'am.

Mayor Lawson – Just state your name, okay Mr. Willis...

Harold Willis – If this is passed, will it override subdivision ordinances on size? Like if it says the house has to be a certain size in the subdivision? If this is passed, like let's say the house has to be 1200 square feet in the subdivision. Then you pass this, does that mean they can build a 400 square foot home?

Town Manager – Okay. The Tiny House has to be 400 square feet or less, and it has to be located on the property where a primary residence is already located

Harold Willis – But the subdivision ordinance says it has to be 1200 square feet.

Vice-Mayor Barnett – The primary residence, not the Tiny Home.

Harold Willis – The Ordinance doesn't say that. main or primary. It says if you build on it, it has to be 1200 square feet.

Town Manager – That's for the main structure then.

Harold Willis – It don't say main.

Town Manager – Well that's totally different because the structure is already there when you're permitting for the Tiny Home, the main/Primary Structure is already on the lot.

Council Member Elliott – So, a pool house, if you put a pool in, can you put a room with 2 for changing and restroom. Is that gonna go through?

Town Attorney – That's an accessory structure. I think it actually says that (looking at the current ordinance). Under that it's just adding the definition of Tiny Homes as another accessory use/structure. Swimming pools, hot-tubs, accessory buildings used for storage. All of those things.

***Council Member Elliott** – Reads out loud §30-3 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mayor Lawson – That's why I go back. There's a lot of unanswered questions that we need to look at like that square footage that's required in a subdivision and things of that nature. I think this is going to be a time process. It's not something we can do today. We need to look at that.

Vice-Mayor Barnett – Let me add this for clarity so everybody kind of gets the idea of how the Planning Commission works. If somebody wants to build a structure or do something in the town, it's submitted to the Planning Commission. If it doesn't conflict with any of the ordinances in place, then it will pass – there's no conflict. We don't have to make a judgement on it or whatever. If it is in question, then it will come before the Council.

Town Manager – That's what the Special Exception & Use Permit is for.

Vice-Mayor Barnett – That's right.

Mayor Lawson – Is there anyone else?

Courtney McCulley – I am here on behalf of passing Tiny Homes. I think it would increase affordability for people, like a Mother-In-Law suite. They would have lower utility costs for them, less maintenance, and it would make whoever's property multi-functional. There are Codes, Virginia Residential Code and International & Residential Code. It talks about square footage, height of ceilings, water, plumbing, and insulation – there are codes. There are several counties in Virginia that allows Tiny Homes. I'm for that.

Steve Williams – Is it possible for someone to put more than one (1) 400 square foot building on their property? Like if they have a primary building, can they put two (2) 400's on there?

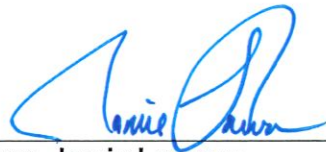
Town Attorney – No, it says one (1) Accessory Structure.

Town Attorney – I have an information sheet that I can make available when we do our Workshop, that DHCD has put out. It explains what a Tiny Home is and it's got all the definitions as well. I'll send that to all of the Council as well. Ms. Kristie, mind to have that out for the next month, and just have that out for the public please?

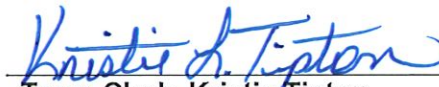
Town Clerk – Yes.

*Mayor Lawson adjourned the meeting at 7:17 PM.

*Mayor Lawson closed the meeting and opened the Town Council Meeting.



Mayor, Jamie Lawson



Town Clerk, Kristie Tipton