

TOWN OF IRON GATE  
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The regular monthly Work Session of the Iron Gate Town Council was held on Monday, April 18, 2022 at 7pm.

Present for the meeting and were Mayor Unroe, Councilpersons Kawahna Persinger, Jennifer Tyree, Debbie Harris, Gary Craig, Vice Mayor Councilperson Richard Erskine and Town Clerk/Treasurer Wendy Biggs. Also present was W.L. Armstrong. Councilperson Roberta Paradise was absent.

The following items were discussed:

Mayor Unroe verified that Chris Keyser, the person who was interested in the dump truck, had decided that he would purchase it from the Town on a monthly payment basis. He will pay his first installment in May and make four equal installment payments on it.

At the next Town Council meeting on Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Unroe will appoint the new Councilmembers to the different committees. Those reappointments will be for Personnel, Streets, Buildings & Grounds and Ordinances. Mayor Unroe has asked Jennifer Tyree to be on the Finance and Budget Committee due to her previous experience of being on Town Council, attending the last two (2) years of Budget meetings and bringing a different thought process to the committee.

The Budget & Finance Committee has met twice already. Typically we would have a new budget almost in place at this time and have it ready to be presented. However, we only received the bulk sewer rate from Alleghany County about two (2) weeks ago. They send in their information to Draper Aden, an engineering firm in Roanoke, and Draper Aden helps to formulate the new sewer rate. Both Alleghany County and Draper Aden have had new people come into positions that directly relate to that process and therefore, the rates were a bit late this year. The water rate will go down about .20 cents per 1,000 gallons this year, which will be a great help. The sewer rate has increased by about \$2300.00 per month for the Town of Iron Gate going into the new fiscal year. When we met with the County last Thursday and questioned why the sewer rate was so high, they explained that O & M (Operation and Maintenance) costs rose about 24% due to the cost of treatment chemicals. They also noted that since no

improvements have been made to the wastewater facilities that they were coming up with a Capital Plan for improvements to those areas. Mayor Unroe explained that Iron Gate is part of Alleghany County and that we were not paying extra for the improvements since we are already paying our portion. It was then questioned by Mayor Unroe if the County may be saving some money if they hired a couple of their own employees to manage the sewer treatment facilities, but we were told that they wouldn't save money doing it that way. Mayor Unroe will meet with Mr. Huber tomorrow regarding this information and we were also told that the County sent back more information to Draper Aden and they will be recalculating the sewer rate. They hope to get that information back by Wednesday. In light of our current monthly sewer rate going up by \$2,300.00, we have looked into Western Virginia Water Authority (WVWA) taking over our system. While it is a viable option to have them take over our system, we still cannot afford to keep two full time employees. Iron Gate does not have a large source of revenue; it relies mostly on its residents and the few smaller businesses we have. It does help that personal property has increased by about 12% and due to the State of Virginia budget being over by such a large amount, localities will see that money come back to them. Some localities are already planning to give it as a credit to their residents; others are planning to help offset costs and others aren't sure yet what they are going to do with the funds they receive. We will likely use it to help offset other rising costs and as of right now, we are not sure how much we will receive. Mike Jeffries from T & L has been in touch with Mayor Unroe about looking to see if we identify the worst areas for our sewer I & I issues. If we can concentrate on those areas specifically, we may be able to leverage what ARPA funds we have and will receive to help in the cost of repairing those areas. Mayor Unroe and Mrs. Biggs met via Zoom last week with the RVARC, DEQ, VDH ODW, DHCD and USDA Rural Development to see about funding and grants that we may be able to apply for. As most of you know, we missed out on the first round of funding from the VDH ODW due to a misconception about the Iron Gate Water Company and Petrus Environmental. At the time, it was thought that the Iron Gate Water Company was the water company for Iron Gate and by the time it was realized that there was a mistake, the funding that we should have received was sent to other areas. We do currently have an application for the second round of funding and are working on getting that submitted. On the sewer side of things, we have been told that the DEQ expects funding to be coming in the next few months, but they do not know how much they will receive.

Iron Gate needs to look forward and realize potential in possible other areas of income for the Town. The Budget and Finance committee knows that raising taxes will not be beneficial to what we need to have accomplished. Mayor Unroe noted that he has been researching solar energy and believes that Iron Gate could benefit from it tremendously. Town Council agreed to have Mayor Unroe look into the information on it and see about having someone come and present the information to Town Council and its residents. The RVARC (Roanoke Valley/Alleghany Regional Commission) and UVA will be two places where Mayor Unroe will gather more information from.




Mayor Unroe then asked Council if there was anything else. Councilperson Harris noted that the animal situation nearby has not been well addressed by the homeowners or animal control. There is no cat ordinance and therefore it's harder to enforce the issues that come from feral cats or even cats that are not properly taken care of.

Councilperson Craig noted that the fire department was at the playground last week before the Easter egg hunt and noted that someone's dogs were leaving a mess behind and they had cleaned up quite a bit of it before the Easter egg hunt on Saturday. The Easter egg hunt went very well; they had quite a bit of folks there and everyone enjoyed themselves and the weather.

With no further business to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm.



Charles Unroe, Mayor



Wendy S. Biggs, Clerk