

**Town of Iron Gate**

P.O. Box 199, 401 Commerce Avenue  
Iron Gate, VA 24448  
Office (540) 862-0770  
February 23, 2023 Minutes

Invocation was given by Reverend David Hanks of the Iron Gate Baptist Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance

The regular Town Council meeting of Thursday, January 26, 2023 was called to order by Mayor Craig at 7:02 pm.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Gary Craig, Vice Mayor Council Member Richard Erskine, Council Members Debbie Harris, Jennifer Tyree, Kawahna Persinger, Mikki Curtis and G.W. Reynolds; Town Clerk & Treasurer Wendy Biggs and Town Attorney Jared Jenkins. Also present were Jerry Clark with the Alleghany Journal and Jerome Johnson with the Bath County Recorder; Jimmy Jeffries, Chazy Nicely; Michael Jeffries with Thompson & Litton; Bobby Wampler and Michael Lynch with Engineering Concepts, Inc. and Zachary Wright with The Thrasher Group.

Mayor Craig then asked if there were any corrections to be made in the minutes for the regular monthly meeting held on Thursday, January 26, 2023 or for the work session held on February 13, 2023; there were none. Mayor Craig then asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Council meeting and work session as presented. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Councilperson Erskine to approve those minutes as presented and second by Councilperson Persinger. With no further questions or comments, Mayor Craig asked for all of those in favor of approving the minutes as recorded to say "I". All six (6) Councilmembers in attendance stated "I".

Mayor Craig asked if anyone had any questions about the disbursements and receipts of the bills in their packet. With no questions, Mayor Craig then asked for a motion to approve the receipts and disbursements of the bills. A motion was made by Councilperson Harris to approve the receipts and disbursements of the bills as presented and was it was second by Vice Mayor Councilperson Erskine. With that, Mayor Craig asked for all of those in favor of approving the receipts and disbursements as recorded to say "I". All six (6) Councilmembers in attendance stated "I".

Mayor Craig then noted that there was one new bill and that was to Wright Express, which is the gas card for the Town vehicles in the amount of \$447.92. Mayor Craig then asked for a

motion to pay the bill as presented. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Councilperson Erskine to approve the payment of the bills as presented and was it was second by Councilperson Persinger. Mayor Craig then asked for a roll call vote:

Debbie Harris: Yes

Jennifer Tyree: Yes

Kawahna Persinger: Yes

Mikki Curtis: Yes

G.W. Reynolds: Yes

Richard Erskine: Yes

The motion was carried and approved.

**Mayor's Report:**

Mayor Craig explained that an RFP (Request for Proposal) ad was ran for engineering services for our upcoming water project. Council has read and reviewed the three (3) proposals at the previous work session and we will discuss those further in the meeting.

We have some reports of trees that need to be trimmed and that are hanging over in the alleys. We will work on getting those cleaned up and trimmed.

The applications for the DEQ SCS (sewer collection services) are still being looked and decided upon by the DEQ. We understand that they will make their determination by mid-March 2023. We still are hopeful that we will receive some grant funds for that project.

Mayor Craig stated that it was good to see Chazy Nicely at the meeting. Pansy Lockhart, his mother-in-law and longtime resident of Iron Gate passed away last Saturday and our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Mayor Craig then thanked Zach Wright, Bobby Wampler, Michael Lynch, Michael Jeffries and Jimmy Jeffries for coming out to the meeting as well.

**Committee Reports:**

None.

**Public Comments:**

Zach Wright (from the Thrasher Group) and Chazy Nicely. Mr. Wright wanted to meet Council and introduce himself as the Regional Manager for the Thrasher Group, who is one of the firms here tonight who submitted a proposal for engineering services. Chazy Nicely then spoke,

stating it was nice to receive a sympathy card from the Town on the day of his mother-in-law's service. However, he and his wife, Kathy were very upset when a late payment notice for the water bill, also for his mother-in-law, was given along with the sympathy card. While Mayor Craig apologized for the notice, Mr. Nicely stood, noted that an apology needed to be given to the family not to him and walked out of Town Hall. Mrs. Biggs then stated that it was her responsibility to send out the notices and therefore it was her fault and she would apologize to Kathy and the family. Mayor Craig once again apologized to the Lockhart family for the action.

### **Old Business:**

Mayor Craig stated that the Town ran an RFP ad for engineering services, as stated earlier. There were three (3) proposals at the end of the deadline for the Town of Iron Gate to consider. The three firms are T&L (Thompson & Litton) from Radford, ECI (Engineering Concepts) from Fincastle/Daleville area and The Thrasher Group out of Beckley, West Virginia. All three firms gave outstanding proposals with a lot of good information.

Mayor Craig then asked if there was any other old business; with no other Old Business to be discussed, Mayor Craig moved into New Business.

### **New Business:**

Mayor Craig stated that we have two (2) requests for adjustments. The first adjustment request is due to a large leak (210,000 gallons) in a building. Upon receiving the water bill, the owner went to the property and found a large leak in a water line. The water was turned off and the leak was repaired; no water went into the sewer. The adjustment requested in this case is in the amount of \$587.03 on the sewer portion of the bill. The second adjustment is due to a leak in the water line within a wall of the house and a leak in an outside spigot. The homeowners have attached the paperwork to show where the leaks have been fixed and no water from either leak went into the sewer. The amount of the requested adjustment on the sewer portion of the bill is \$108.02. Vice Mayor Councilperson Erskine made the motion to grant both adjustments on the sewer portion of the bill as requested. Councilperson Tyree second the motion. A roll call vote was then taken:

Debbie Harris: Yes

Jennifer Tyree: Yes

Kawahna Persinger: Yes

Mikki Curtis: Yes

G.W. Reynolds: Yes

Richard Erskine: Yes

The motion was carried and approved. Mrs. Biggs will contact those residents on Friday and let them know.

Mayor Craig then asked Town Council if anyone had any questions for the engineering firms. Councilperson Tyree asked them if they had anything to say to Council as engineers. ECI went first, stating that they are located in Botetourt County, about a half hour away. They have worked with the Town of Iron Gate in the past on different projects and would love to be considered for the projects that Iron Gate will have. Michael Jeffries went next, from T & L. He noted that ECI and T&L are practically neighbors and that T&L has worked with the Town for the past four (4) years on sewer funding and most recently on water funding. Zach Wright from the Thrasher Group spoke last, stating that they are from West Virginia and are trying to make their presence known in Southwest Virginia. They try to go beyond just being a typical engineering firm and are there for their clients even in the middle of night and on holidays. They are in their 40<sup>th</sup> year of business and prefer to work in localities of 40,000 people or less. They appreciate the opportunity to present a proposal since there a lot of good engineering firms in attendance.

Councilperson Persinger then stated to the engineering firms that the Town has received a large sum of money. While it's understood that items were given an estimated cost, she was hoping that a couple thousand dollars would be left over. If there were, then hopefully the Town would be able to use the funds in accordance with the terms of the loan to be able to do a few more things. Mayor Craig explained that the items listed in the grant application are the only things we can use that funding for. Michael Jeffries noted that for the most part, yes, we do need to stay within the projects of the application. Once the projects are finished and if you have funds left over and if it's water related, then there is a possibility that we can work with the VDH to add it in. Within the funding agreement, you can move funds from one place to another to get a better bang for your buck so to speak. It does need to be within the guidelines of the agreement for any project. An evaluation can be done once the project is started and we can then go the VDH and say "this is what we're thinking". Mayor Craig noted that while he understands that Mr. Jeffries cannot speak for VDH, his firm is working with VDH on these types of projects and they would be very familiar. ECI also noted that they worked with the Town of Buchanan on their water system and also for funding. They had the same concerns and desires as the Town of Iron Gate. It is correct that anything that is done has to pertain to water; in this case they were able to get the Town of Buchanan a Gator for their Public Works crew to use as they read meters each month. Craigsville also had the same concerns and ideas and even though it was through a different funding agency, ECI was able to get them a dump truck and a backhoe. Funding can be moved around to accommodate for these things as long as it has to do with upkeep and maintenance for water. Zach Wright stated that he agreed, as long as it was within the scope of the project, then it could be done in most cases. Councilperson Persinger thanked the firms and appreciated their interest.

Councilperson Harris questioned the firms that if there was funding leftover, what's the process for using those funds? ECI responded that they would follow up with the funding agency about it and see if some other things could be done or equipment purchased. It's also important to

note that if you have a low interest loan and grant funding, you have to use the grant funding last.

Mayor Craig then asked Mrs. Biggs if she had any questions; she replied not at this time. Mayor Craig did have a question that if they had someone who could assist Mrs. Biggs with keeping up with receipts and funding requests. All three firms expressed that they would be able to assist Mrs. Biggs with the receipts and disbursements and be able to help keep those records on file for the Town of Iron Gate. Mayor Craig explained that while Mrs. Biggs is capable, he wanted to be sure that if the assistance was needed, that someone would be able to help.

Mayor Craig then asked if Council had any more questions; there were none. Mayor Craig then thanked the engineering firms for coming and we appreciated the proposals that were submitted. With that, Mayor Craig asked Council if there was a motion for the hiring of an engineering firm or firms as requested by our advertisement. Councilperson Persinger then made a motion to accept all three (3) engineering firms, to be at the disposal of the Town for the projects that the Town has, or parts of the projects that the Town has. Mayor Craig then asked the firms if they would be interested and okay with that decision; they all agreed and stated it was something that most localities are doing. Mayor Craig confirmed with Councilperson Persinger that she was looking to accept all three (3) engineering firms on an open-ended contract with the Town of Iron Gate. Councilperson Persinger confirmed the motion and Vice Mayor Councilperson Erskine second the motion. With no further comments, questions or concerns, a roll call vote was taken:

Debbie Harris: Yes

Jennifer Tyree: Yes

Kawahna Persinger: Yes

Mikki Curtis: Yes

G.W. Reynolds: Yes

Richard Erskine: Yes

The motion was carried and approved. Mayor Craig congratulated the engineering firms of Thompson & Litton, ECI and The Thrasher Group and thanked them once again. Council will need to discuss and decide who will do the water project and once that decision is made, you will be notified. ECI thanked Council for the opportunity and looks forward to continuing to work with the Town and that they're excited for us and our project. Mayor Craig also noted excitement at the idea of a better quality of life for the residents. He hopes this isn't the end and that there's more to come to better things for the Town of Iron Gate.

Mayor Craig then announced that Town Council will get ready to go into a closed Executive Session under VA Code 2.2-3711, Item #7- Legal. He asked if there was any further new business to discuss; there was none. Mayor Craig then noted that no other business would be conducted after the closed executive session. With that, Mayor Craig asked for a motion to enter into a closed Executive Session under VA Code 2.2-3711, Item #7- Legal. Councilperson Tyree made the motion to enter into a closed Executive Session under VA Code 2.2-3711, Item

#7- Legal; Councilperson Harris second the motion. Mayor Craig then asked all of those in favor to say "I"; all six Councilmembers in attendance stated "I".

Mayor Craig then stated that Council was ready to come back into an open session; that no other business was conducted other than what the closed was for and asked for a motion to enter back into an open session from a closed Executive Session under VA Code 2.2-3711, Item #7- Legal. Councilperson Persinger made the motion to enter back into open session from a closed Executive Session under VA Code 2.2-3711, Item#7- Legal and Councilperson Reynolds second the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

Debbie Harris: Yes

Jennifer Tyree: Yes

Kawahna Persinger: Yes

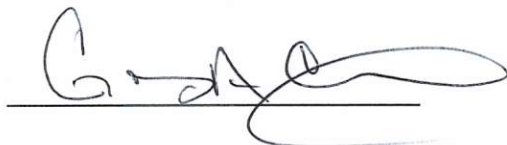
Mikki Curtis: Yes

G.W. Reynolds: Yes

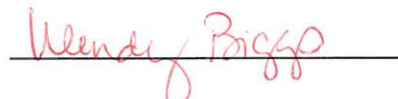
Richard Erskine: Yes

The motion was carried and approved.

Councilperson Persinger noted that we needed to be sure to set the dates for the next work session and Council meeting before people leave the Council meetings. The next work session will be March 20<sup>th</sup> and the next Council Meeting will be March 30<sup>th</sup>, both at 7:00pm. There being no further new business to be discussed, a motion to adjourn was made by Councilperson Erskine and second by Councilperson Curtis at 8:15pm. Mayor Craig then asked all of those in favor of the adjournment to say "I". All six (6) Councilmembers in attendance stated "I".



**Gary A. Craig, Mayor**



**Wendy S. Biggs, Clerk**