

TOWN OF IRON GATE
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The regular monthly Work Session of the Iron Gate Town Council was held on Monday, May 15, 2023 at 7pm, at Town Hall.

Present for the meeting were Mayor Craig, Councilpersons Debbie Harris, Jennifer Tyree, Kawahna Persinger, G.W. Reynolds; Vice Mayor Councilperson Richard Erskine and Town Clerk/Treasurer Wendy Biggs. The only resident for the work session was Randy Unroe. Councilperson Brandon Marshall was absent.

Mayor Craig asked Richard Erskine to present the invocation.

The following items were discussed:

Mayor Craig handed each Councilmember and Mrs. Biggs an agenda for the evening and then welcomed everyone. The item of discussion first was an update on the storm water pipe that crosses Ms. Simpson's yard. Zach Wright from the Thrasher Group came and met with Mayor Craig and Mrs. Biggs to go over what records we had on the storm water system. Then Mayor Craig and Mr. Wright walked the area where the storm water lines run to get a better idea of what they were looking at. Mr. Wright had a few ideas of what they could do to move the storm line that runs through Ms. Simpson's yard and he also noted that he would look into grants for the storm line, as he was sure there were grant funds out there. Once Mr. Wright has all the information, he will come back and present the information to Mayor Craig and Town Council and we can move forward from there. As a side note, Mr. Wright also explained that in a case where water lines and storm water lines run parallel or near each other, by code they need to be so many feet apart. If any sidewalks need to be removed during this process, they will be fixed once the work is done on the lines. As for the water project, the Thrasher Group plans on getting started in late summer or early fall, which brings us to the next item to be discussed.

We had thought all these years that the lot across from Rollers Smokehouse and the Washburn's belonged to the Town. After a discussion about placing the pressure reducing valve (PRV) there, we found that the lot does not belong to the Town, but does belong to VDOT. Mayor Craig explained that he called VDOT and spoke with Mr. Alvin Trout, who is an Assistant Residency/ Land Use Engineer in our district. According to Mr. Trout, if the Town were to try and purchase the property, it would take a period of years

that we do not have. However, we can apply for a Land Use Permit by way of a resolution that Council would need to approve. As Mr. Trout has explained it, we can use the land for our purpose of installing a PRV as long as we put the property back as close as we can to its original state AND as long as we maintain the property (weed eating and mowing, as we currently do). This is something that can be done in a timelier manner and it's something that other localities have done. Town Council agreed this was a better solution than tying something up for years. It will be discussed and voted on at the next Council meeting and if passed, the resolution will be sent to Mr. Trout so that the proper paperwork can be finalized.

Mayor Craig then explained to Council that there are many ordinances that need to be updated. The one he wanted to discuss at the work session for the evening is the one pertaining to grass and weeds. While we do not have a lot of folks who do not keep up their grass, we do have some that we need to send repeated letters to. More recently it has come to Mayor Craig's attention that we may not be charging enough for the Town Crew to come and cut the grass and weed eat. The part of the ordinance that deals with how much to charge needs and should be updated; we currently charge \$30.00 per yard. What Mayor Craig is proposing is that we follow the Clifton Forge grass and weed ordinance, specifically Section 90-4, subsections a, b, c and d, with some changes. This would be done by the Ordinance Committee (Councilperson Harris and Councilperson Marshall) and Mayor Craig, with guidance from Town Attorney Jared Jenkins. The Clifton Forge Ordinance was briefly discussed with certain key points that needed to be determined. Councilperson Tyree questioned who would be the enforcement authority of this ordinance since we had no code enforcement officer or administrator. After some discussion, it was determined that the head of Public Works (Junior Wilmore) and Mrs. Biggs would share the responsibility, since he is around Town and since she already sends out the grass letters. Also on discussion was the monetary amount of \$150.00 that is to be charged. Mayor Craig explained that when the Town crew recently cut the lots on Market Avenue at the corner of 4th Street and then another lot between Pritt's and Bayne's, it took them a total of two (2) hours. It took them an hour and a half to mow, using the tractor (which needed to have the bucket taken off the back and the mower put on), a push mower and a weed eater. That did not include the time to change implements, go over to the lots or the cost of the gas for the equipment. Council seemed in agreement; they also questioned how many people the Town crew had to cut grass for in this type of situation. Mrs. Biggs explained that it may be once or twice a year, depending on the situation. In this case, the property owner does not live here locally and she tried to call him numerous times, with no luck in speaking with him. Mayor Craig then asked Council if they would be in agreement to have the ordinance for grass and weeds updated, with the Ordinance Committee, himself and Mr. Jenkins working on it. They agreed. Mrs. Biggs reminded everyone that there is process in changing an ordinance; it would need to be updated; present a final draft to Council at a work session; an ad ran for a Public Hearing on updating the ordinance; a Public hearing would need to be held for any comments or questions or suggestions; if all goes well

with the Public Hearing, then it would be presented to Council for a final vote. Everyone understood and agreed.

The next item for discussion was the possibility of locking the playground every evening and then unlocking each morning. There have been several complaints about people going down to the playground and either hanging out or playing basketball after dark. It clearly states that the playground is closed at dusk, but that doesn't seem to matter. Mayor Craig explained that some of the residents would volunteer to lock the gate to the playground each evening at dusk and unlock it in the morning on the weekends, if the Town crew would unlock it during the weekdays. The large gate needs to be repaired and a new smaller entry gate reinstalled. Currently there seems to also be issues with people allowing dogs into the playground and not cleaning up after them. Councilpersons Persinger and Harris questioned about getting bags for the playground for the dogs and Mayor Craig explained that it was something that could be looked into. Mrs. Biggs reminded everyone that it was her understanding that the reason the small entry gate wasn't there is because people would go down to the playground and take it off its hinges; the Town crew was tired of putting it back on, so they just left it off. Mayor Craig then mentioned that maybe he would up trail cameras and try to catch whomever was doing the vandalizing; it was done before but to no avail. However, Mayor Craig was willing to try again.

The trash truck is being borrowed by the County currently. Over the past few months, they have had some major issues with their fleet and they have reached out to us and asked if they could borrow our trash truck. We have allowed them to borrow it, except on Thursdays. The County has been very good to us about borrowing it; they bring it back full of diesel; put new tires on it; fixed anything that needs to be fixed. Recently, the hydraulic arm on the back of the trash truck started leaking. The County found and purchased the seals to get it fixed, but unfortunately they weren't able to fix it because they were behind in their garage. They only have one mechanic working right now, so it would be a while before the hydraulic seal could be repaired. However, they did say that we could take it to whomever and have it repaired and they would pay the bill. Last Friday they called and said that the seal actually broke loose and it had to be repaired. It is now at Seibel's and should be all ready to go by Tuesday. Mayor Craig will call on Tuesday to be sure that it's done and ready to go; the County will drop it back off to us unless they have something come up.

As most of you know, there is a major cat issue on Chalybeate Avenue and 6th Street. We have contacted Todd Ailstock with the County Animal Control and he explained what we could do. At this time, he can put a cage out to catch one cat per week, which will then be taken up to the Humane Society in Low Moor. If the cat that has been caught has a collar or a bell of some sort, it will be released. Within the first day or two of putting the cage out, a cat was caught but then released because it had a collar. The second cat that was caught was taken up to the Humane Society. According to Deputy Ailstock, if the cat has a notched ear, it does not count to be released. The animal has to

have a collar. While it will be a slow process, we at least have one cat per week to be able to take to the Humane Society. Mayor Craig noted that a letter was sent to each of the residences in the area that explained the situation.

On the bulletin board here at Town Hall and the Post Office, there will be a letter regarding the Fund Drive that the Iron Gate Volunteer Fire Department has done. The Fund Drive is done in order for the fire department to purchase needed equipment and supplies. Mayor Craig briefly read the letter and explained that if anyone wanted to donate they could take it by the fire department, mail it or bring it by Town Hall and Mrs. Biggs would give it to them.

The budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 has been completed. A thank you to Councilperson Persinger, Councilperson Tyree and Mrs. Biggs for working on it this year. Mrs. Biggs stated that our rates for sewer did not go up this year and that our water rates went down some, which is the reason that the utility bill will remain the same. The only item that was considered to be raised was the cigarette tax, which would go from \$.20 cents per pack to \$.30 per pack. Mrs. Biggs also noted that there were some discussions about certain budget items needing to be cut back on and others increased. Mayor Craig explained that certain parts and regular maintenance items are expensive and that was one area where we needed to watch our spending on. There will be a Public Hearing before our next Council meeting at 7pm to discuss the budget for FY 2023-2024.

Also of interest, Town Attorney Jared Jenkins has filed the Town's Response to the Jury's Decision in the Jennifer Simpson case. There still has not been a date set for the hearing on the attorney's fees and we have not heard back from the attorney in Bath County. Councilperson Persinger was concerned that the paperwork had been filed in a timely manner, as we have only a certain amount of time to respond. Mayor Craig noted her concern and also explained that Mr. Jenkins is aware of the time constraints to respond.

In conjunction with the cost of maintenance items and parts and how expensive everything is, Mayor Craig has requested Council's permission to fill out an application for credit to Fisher's Auto Parts in Clifton Forge. While it's easier to go to another parts store that we have an account with already and just get what is needed, we need to be proactive about getting what we need for the best price. Mrs. Biggs has recently called around for several items that was needed to try and get the best price and sometimes that is a substantial amount. Town Council will need to vote at the next Council meeting to allow Mayor Craig to sign for an application for an account at Fisher's Auto Parts.

Mayor Craig then asked if there was any other business to discuss. Councilperson Harris asked how the sidewalk issue with VDOT was coming along. Mayor Craig responded to say that he had spoken with VDOT about it and they remember the issue being brought up. However, they do not know what became of it or what will become of it. Councilperson Harris then explained that she recently took a neighbor to an eye

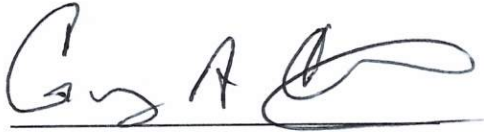
appointment. After the neighbor was in the appointment for about 15 minutes, the doctor came out to Ms. Harris and told her that she needed to take the neighbor to the hospital emergency room immediately because she was at a seriously high risk for a stroke. Ms. Harris did take the neighbor to the hospital and the neighbor has received treatment. However, there is still concern for the neighbor since she is not well and her husband is not healthy, either. Councilperson Harris asked about forming a caring committee of sorts; those who would be able to help take elderly or those who are ill to appointments or just look in on them. Mayor Craig explained that while he was all for that, there would be some legal issues. He went on to say that if Councilperson Harris would like to form such a group on her own, that the Town would not have any problems with perhaps recognizing the group in some type of resolution.

Councilperson Reynolds asked about the Adopt-A-Highway program for Iron Gate. As far as Mayor Craig knew, there were no adopted places in Iron Gate. He did note that the program will supply safety vests and bags and they will come and pick up whatever is placed in the bags. Councilperson Reynolds will check into it.

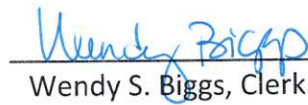
The last item to be discussed by Mayor Craig is the Roads of Honor banners. Former Mayor Chuck Unroe spoke to Mayor Craig about a week or so ago about the program and Mayor Craig thought that the Town would be interested. A meeting was then arranged at Town Hall with Mayor Craig, Mrs. Biggs and Mr. William (Bill) Atherholt from VFW Post 1033 in Covington, to discuss how it all worked. Mayor Craig then went over the application with Council and explained that it would need to be filled out, then a picture and a check for \$165.00 would be attached to the form. Mr. Atherholt would pick up the form, picture and money from Mrs. Biggs. Once twenty applications collectively are received (this would be from Covington, Clifton Forge and Iron Gate), they would be sent to the printer. The banners would be made and the banners and hardware would be sent back to the locality. The locality would put up the banners and they last about 3 to 5 years. Councilperson Erskine explained that while the poles with current banners have the okay to have the banners on them, we would also need to reach out to Lumos and Dominion Energy for the other poles. Mayor Craig explained that we would line Market Avenue with them first, then Commerce Avenue. Councilperson Tyree asked if they would replace the seasonal banners we have now along Market Avenue and Mayor Craig explained they would. Council agreed to allow the banners and thought it would be a respectful way to remember those who serve.

Resident Randy Unroe then asked Mayor Craig if he had heard anything about the meter before the river being put in. Mayor Craig replied that he had messaged Ricky Bourne, the Public Works Director at the County, but had not heard back from him. Mr. Unroe then asked how it wasn't VDOT's issue with the pipe at Ms. Simpson's house; stating they were the ones who likely put it in and why weren't they sued? Mayor Craig responded that it was said that VDOT cannot be sued and it wasn't their responsibility. Mr. Unroe noted that somewhere along the line we will end up having to pay for it out of our own pockets in the form of a tax.

With no further business to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary A. Craig", written over a horizontal line.

Gary A. Craig, Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wendy S. Biggs", written over a horizontal line.

Wendy S. Biggs, Clerk