

TOWN OF IRON GATE
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The Iron Gate Town Council held a Work Session on August 19th, 2024 at 7pm.

The meeting officially began at 7:06 p.m.

Present: Councilperson Jennifer Tyree, Councilperson Debbie Harris, Councilperson Kawahna Persinger, Vice Mayor Richard Erskine, Mayor Gary Craig, and Town Clerk/Treasurer Ashley Prior

Absent: Councilperson G.W. Reynolds, and Councilperson Brandon Marshall

In Attendance: Jimmy Jeffries and Larry Friend

Mayor Craig stated that Larry Friend is looking to buy the house on 5th street behind Twink's 220 Diner. The only way he can buy the property is if he is able to put his camper in the yard, behind the house, to live in while he remodels the house. Mayor Craig stated that he explained to Mr. Friend that according to our town ordinance, living in a camper on your property is prohibited but he can come and make his plea to town council. Mr. Friend addressed the council and said that he will need to live in his camper between 6 months and a year. Councilperson Harris asked what he would do for sewer facilities. Mr. Friend commented saying he would be hooked up to water, sewer, and power, along with paying for whatever he needs to get it hooked up. Councilperson Harris asked if Mr. Friend would be living in the house himself. Mr. Friend stated yes, once the house is done, I will be moving in it. Vice Mayor Erskine gave a little history of the house Mr. Friend is looking to buy, then asked Mr. Friend if he is going to attach the water to his camper. Mr. Friend stated that he is going to start at the water meter and run all new water lines just like it was when the house was built, and add a freeze proof spigot to where his camper will go, and the same with his sewer. Vice Mayor Erskine asked Mr. Friend if he will be able to bring his camper through the back where the mower is brought in. Mr. Friend said no, he will need to tear down part of the fencing, bring his camper in, and then put that part of the fencing back up.

Councilperson Harris asked if the property was already purchased. Mr. Friend said not yet, and this, him living in the camper, is what he is worried about. Mayor Craig asked Mr. Friend where he is planning on setting the camper at while he is remodeling. Mr. Friend stated that he will back it right in between the houses away from the building. Councilperson Persinger asked what Mr. Friend's contingency plan is if council does not approve his request. Mr. Friend stated that he is still going to try to buy it but he will need to talk to the current owner about getting a lower payment. Mr. Friend went on stating that he and his wife separated three years ago and he has been living in his camp on her and her uncle's property. Mr. Friend continued stating he was planning to move to Wytheville when he came across this property, he likes the neighborhood and wants to stay. Councilperson Persinger stated so what you are saying is you can't keep your camper where it's at now and just drive up here and work on your property and go back and stay in your camper. Mr. Friend said yes and no, and he would need to speak to his ex-wife. Vice Mayor Erskine stated, one thing about it Kawahna, if he has that camper sitting in the back yard there, there is no problem about keeping an eye on it. Councilperson Persinger said that's my point there have been other people that have wanted to come here and set a camper up, one was hooked up to water and a water hose and they were told they couldn't do that.

Mayor Craig stated he would like to read the Ordinance because he wouldn't be doing his due diligence if he didn't. Mayor Craig proceeded to read *Ordinance 5-1-7 pertaining to storage of campers, travel trailers, or travel trailers on land containing a dwelling house or mobile home*. It states *one camper or travel trailer may be stored on any lot or parcel of land containing a dwelling within the Town of Iron Gate, Virginia, provided that such camper or trailer is not used for any purpose while stored and provided it is stored to the rear of the principle dwelling on the lot to the farthest extent possible*. Mayor Craig stated this is the only thing on the Ordinance of a camper within the Town of Iron Gate. Councilperson Tyree said she would welcome Mr. Friend to the neighborhood in every way, but a couple years ago someone up here that was wanting to buy a home across from the BBQ place, and that person wanted to live in a camper until they fixed the house up and council, at the time, told them no. Councilperson Persinger said she thinks council also told the family that bought the two-story blue house on the same side of the street no. The family had a huge motor home they wanted to hook up. Councilperson Tyree stated she would love it, but you have to go by the ordinance and living in it would be the problem. Mr. Friend stated that he could probably have the house fixed in six months and it would not be until January when he would start.

Vice Mayor Erskine asked about the building. Mr. Friend stated that it is coming out and a new one is going to be put in. Vice Mayor Erskine asked is Mr. Friend could put the new one a little bit off the line because right now the back of what was the building is about to fall onto Mayor Erskine's property. Mr. Friend stated yes, that was the first thing he is going to do, is tear that building down and put the new one up so he will a place to store his tools. Mayor Craig stated there is an offset five foot from the fence line, unless you are on a corner lot, then the corner lot has a specific setback due to being on the corner next to the road. Councilperson Persinger stated she is like Jeniffer, she does not have a problem with Mr. Friend fixing the place up, but we have previously stuck with this ordinance with other people, and she is afraid if council makes an exception to the rule, they will be opening a can of worms.

Mayor Craig said to Mr. Friend that council cannot make an official vote in a work session, and Mr. Friend is welcome to come back Thursday August 29th, 2024 at seven pm for the council meeting and plead his case again and council will make the decision. Mr. Friend then said there will not be any hard feeling either way and he wants to be part of our neighborhood.

Mayor Craig stated that the next order of business contains another partial of land at 400 7th Street. That house has been put up for sale for rehab or to be torn down. Councilperson Persinger asked if the property was Kim Ried's house. Mayor Craig stated yes, the house is up for sale, however, the garage sets partially on the alley way running through the seventh and six hundred block. Technically we don't see a road going through there because it goes straight over the hill and through the creek. The agreement was the garage can stay there as long as Luther, because Luther was the gentleman who owned it at the time, was alive and once Luther passed away the agreement did not convey. Mayor Craig stated he did speak to the Realtor and made them aware of the situation that the garage is sitting on town property and needs to be either moved or torn down. Mayor Craig added, this was before the for-sale sign was placed in the yard. Someone has approached Ashley about the back part of the garage being on town property and that there was an agreement. We cannot find an agreement here, and they cannot produce an agreement. Chuck Unroe says he is positive that the agreement is when the homeowner passed that no agreements convey. Mayor Craig stated that his stand personally is if they cannot produce an agreement and we cannot find an agreement it's on town property, it does not stand. Chuck Unroe is the town zoner and that is his understanding to this as well. Mayor Craig stated that he is passing this to council so they can discuss.

Mayor Craig continued, with that being said, if the new buyer decides to tear part of the house down and rebuild there are setbacks they will need to constrain to. When the house was built, the setbacks were not there, and there are now more stringent setbacks they will have to adhere to when they build the home back. Vice Mayor Erskine stated he was on council when they voted those agreements out and that none would be renewed. At one time the town did lease pieces of property, streets, and alley that weren't being used for a set fee by the year. At the time the council voted unanimously not to renew any leases. Mayor Craig stated that part of the alley does contain our sewer system and runs right through the alley. Councilperson Tyree stated she feels the council is being very unwelcoming, but if we had a problem with the sewer and we had to dig the sewer up, would that building be interfering. Mayor Craig stated it could be, yes, you could possibly undermine that building when they start to dig for the sewer. Councilperson Persinger said if it was an agreement with Mr. Luther for the garage to remain there until Mr. Luther passed away, then from that point on that agreement is null and void, so the new owner would need to tear the garage down or move it. It will also depend on new guidelines as far as setbacks where the new house would be, depending on the size house they're bringing in they may not have room. Councilperson Tyree asked Mayor Craig is he heard they are going to tear that house down. Mayor Craig said no I am not hearing they are going to tear it down; it is for rehab or demolish by the Realtor and that is the way they listed it. Vice Mayor Erskine asked how big the lot is. Mayor Craig stated he is not sure how big the lot is, he was trying to look it up and the GIS was not working. Mayor Craig continued that these setbacks weren't in there for a corner lot. You have setbacks with utilities running through the back side of the property and you cannot build over the hill. Councilperson Tyree asked what Chuck Unroe said about the property and Mayor Craig said that Chuck Unroe agrees that it needs to be torn down or moved. Mayor Craig continued by saying that Chuck Unroe is not trying to be fractious or unwelcoming but he has an obligation as the towns zoner to make sure it is zoned properly. Mayor Craig asked council if he has permission to contact the Realtor and let them know where council stands.

Councilperson Tyree asked if the Realtor is saying the house has to go. Mayor Craig stated that as long as nothing is torn off of it, or it isn't torn down, it is good where it is. In other words, a piece of board can come down and another one right back up, the buyer cannot go in and tear half the house down and build it back.

Having no further business to discuss, the Work Session concluded at 8:06 pm. Council will meet again on August 29th, 2024 at 7:00pm.

Gary A Craig, Mayor

Ashley C Prior, Clerk