

TOWN OF IRON GATE
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The Iron Gate Town Council held a Work Session on September 16th, 2024 at 7 pm.

The meeting officially began at 7:10 p.m.

Present: Councilperson Jennifer Tyree, Vice Mayor Richard Erskine, Councilperson Brandon Marshall, Mayor Gary Craig, and Town Clerk/Treasurer Ashley Prior

Absent: Councilperson Kawahna Persinger, Councilperson G.W. Reynolds, and Councilperson Debbie Harris

In Attendance: Jimmy Jeffries

Mayor Craig stated the first order of business and that it will affect everyone.

*Dated September 11th, 2024.
Mayor Gary Craig
Iron Gate Town Council*

*Dear Mayor Craig and members of Iron Gate Town Council.
It is after much thought and careful consideration that I resign from my position as council member on Iron Gate Town Council. This decision did not come easily to me, but is one I make for health and personal reasons.
I have enjoyed working with and getting to know each of the members of council, staff, and administration. I wish the council continued success and wisdom in their governance of town affairs. I appreciate all the time and effort each of you give to Iron Gate.*

*Sincerely,
Debbie Harris*

Vice Mayor Erskine asked what the effective date is on Councilperson Harris's resignation. Mayor Craig stated she doesn't have an effective date; she only dated her resignation for the eleventh of September. Since she did not put an effective date on it, her effective date will be the date we

accept her resignation. Mayor Craig stated, we have a letter from the Alleghany County Sheriff's Office stating that they are moving their impound lot from the Governmental Complex to the Water Treatment Facility on Fork Farm Road. They have been ample area for storing vehicle for evidentiary purposes and are asking the Town of Iron Gate to donate some of the milling that is being stored across the tracks, that will allow us to have an area that is free of weeds and mud. Thank you for your consideration towards this request.

Respectfully,
Kyle M. Moore
Sheriff, Alleghany County

Mayor Craig stated that Vice Mayor Erskine was present when he received the letter and he wasn't sure if the town could do that. He said once he spoke to Vice Mayor Erskine, Vice Mayor Erskine stated, you are the mayor and control this part of the governance, and the fact that we don't have anything invested in those millings. Those millings were given to the town when the 220 project was completed, and we will never use them all. Mayor Craig continued, we sat on this for a little bit then Chris Fisher called and we spoke to him, and we did come to an agreement. We did give the Sheriff's Department several loads of milling, maybe one third that is down there. In return for the millings, the month of September 16th through October 15th, we will not receive a bill from the Sheriff's Office for the police force. Mayor Craig stated he thought that was a great trade. Mayor Craig said he was also informed that Mr. Ailstock has been writing tickets left and right, and that will be more income for the town.

Mayor Craig reminded council that during the next council meeting the school board will be doing a presentation like last year.

Mayor Craig stated that at ten o'clock in the morning there will be a pre bid at Town Hall. Sarah Cook, and the Thrasher Group will be present along with everyone bidding on the water project. The pre bid will consist of everyone asking questions, and getting the information they need for their bid, then it will go out for the time scheduled, then we will go from there. Councilperson Marshall asked if there will be any actual bids. Mayor Craig replied no, they are just asking questions and getting answers. Councilperson Marshall said so they can come up with their figure, correct, and are they actually coming in to bid. Mayor Craig said yes, that is correct, and yes, contractors are coming in to bid. The Thrasher Group are the ones who is overseeing the project and they are facilitating the meeting.

Mayor Craig said he did speak with Barry Matthews from the Department of Health. We called him making sure we are in compliance with everything and Barry did assure us that we are in compliance with everything they need, and we are ahead of the game. Mr. Jeffries from Thompson and Litton is no longer our project supervisor, Mr. Donald "Butch" Wirts is our new project supervisor. Councilperson Tyree asked if they will get results. Mayor Craig replied he was a lot easier to speak to and was very helpful. He even gave Ashley his phone number, email, and said if we need anything to reach out to him, he is here to help move this project forward and wants to make it happen.

Mayor Craig stated he attended the Children's Environmental Health (CEH) Day and signed the Proclamation.

Mayor Craig said those of you that have been around and heard Wendy talk about UBMax and gWorks, it is our billing software, which tracks our water bills, and printing them. Mayor Craig then asked Ashley what else it UBMax does. Ashley responded it's like you said, the guys bring the readings to me and I put it those reading in the system, it generates the bill, when customers come and pay, I post the payments, that is basically our entire billing system. Mayor Craig asked Ashley without UBMax, can you create a water bill. Ashley stated no, absolutely not. Mayor Craig said, the reason I asked Ashley is because I wanted council to hear it from her, not me. Our UBMax system is ending December first. Councilperson Marshall asked if they are going out of business. Mayor Craig said no, they are closing down the portion of the software we have and are going with an innovative cloud base hub, what they call UBhub and frontdesk. UBmax is switching from quarterly payments to annual payments along with a price increase. Councilperson Marshall stated they are strong arming us. Mayor Craig responded that he has called around to different localities inquiring about their systems, and either they have an inhouse system or they would not recommend their system due to the price. Council will need to vote to approve the purchase. Mayor Craig mentioned compensation for Wendy.

Mayor Craig said there is no sewer line where the garage sits at the house on seventh street, however, there are power lines that are considered low voltage. There is no agreement in effect that allows that garage to be on town property. As of right now, according to the ordinance, the garage will need to be moved. I have not had a chance to speak to the owners regarding this.

Mayor Craig stated he was approached by someone who was under the impression that town hall was now for employees only due to a sign the mayor had posted. There is a sign posted on the conference room door that is for employees only. That is a public records room and you can file a FOIA request or ask Ashley to get information for you. That is not a room that anyone can just walk into and go through. Councilperson Marshall said that is where we look through our ordinances. Mayor Craig stated you are also a town official. The town still keeps files in that room that isn't privy to the FOIA. So, if anyone comes to any member of council saying that town hall is closed except employees only, please tell them they have been misinformed and town hall is open to everyone. The only room that is for employees only is the conference room.

Councilperson Tyree asked where the town stands with a lawyer. Mayor Craig stated that he is still waiting on Mrs. Crawley, at VML, to return his call. Councilperson Tyree verified the town using VML. Mayor Craig stated yes. Councilperson Tyree stated as soon as the ruling comes down, the lawyers are going to want their money. I don't think they will be lenient on waiting. If we do not have legal representation will that be a delay for us. Mayor Craig stated no, here's the deal, the ruling will come down to one of two ways. Either we owe them, or no they didn't do it right and we start over. If they say we owe, we will have ninety days to have our lawyer file if the town wants to take it to the supreme court, which I don't think will happen. I have already told you I have a plan in place, I have spoken to you about it. It's better than what the county's plan will be, but it will keep our town. All we can do right now is wait. Councilperson Tyree stated I want to be prepared.

Having no further business to discuss, the Work Session concluded at 8:17 pm. Council will meet again on September 26th, 2024 at 7:00pm.

Gary A Craig, Mayor

Ashley C Prior, Clerk