

Town Of Iron Gate
P.O. Box 199
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Iron Gate, VA 24448
Phone: (540) 862-0770

The Iron Gate Town Council Meeting was held February 27th, 2025 at 7 p.m. in Town Hall

Councilwoman Norvella Burrell gave the invocation.

The Pledge of Allegiance was then cited.

The meeting officially began at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Mayor Kawahna Persinger, Councilwoman Jennifer Tyree, Vice Mayor Brandon Marshall, Councilman Neil Hardesty, Councilwoman Norvella Burrell, and Town Clerk/Treasurer Ashley Prior. In attendance for the community are, Jimmy Jeffries, and Paul and Pamela Handwerk. Also present, Jennifer Bailey of the Alleghany Journal, and David Crosier from the Bath County Recorder.

Approval of Minutes:

Mayor Persinger said she needs approval of the minutes for the December Council Meeting, that we weren't able to do in January, the Work Session that was held on January 13th, and the Work Session for February 18th. We were here on January 30th, but due to not having a quorum we were not able to have an official meeting. I did attach to this packet the agenda from January 30th. A motion was made by Councilwoman Tyree, and seconded by Vice Mayor Marshall. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to change the approve the minutes.

Receipts and Disbursements:

Mayor Persinger informed council that the receipts and disbursements should be in the back of your packet as far as what has been paid out and to who. I hope you have had an opportunity to review those, we just paper clipped them separately. It's going to Junior, Dominion, places like that. Mayor Persinger

asked for a motion to approve the Receipts and Disbursements. A motion was given by Councilwoman Tyree, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to change the approve the Receipts and Disbursements.

Mayor’s Report:

Mayor Persinger said she has a couple of pages here, so she will try and make this short as possible. First of all, I would like to start by officially introducing the new council members that we have, Mr. Hardesty, and Mrs. Norvella Burrell. I would like to thank both of them for being willing to serve on the council so we can have these meetings as needed and as required. We had spoken previously in January about the American flags and flying them at half-staff. Weve been doing that for years and years and the town will continue to do that out of respect for those residents who have passed. If anyone has any issues they can come to council and we can discuss it as a group.

The bulk rate for the sewer portion to the county is going to go down sometime around March or April. It should be reflected on the bill for around 1700 dollars a month. That does not mean at the end of the year they will not give us a bill for the True-Up and say this is what you owe, we will have to wait and see.

We received our first bill, which is for December, from our town attorney and I will let you all take a look at that. The amount he charged us for that bill is 160.00 and payment has already been sent out for that. Ashley and I have both spoken to him on different days, we are keeping track of when we call and how long we are on the phone so we have a ball park figure of what he is going to charge us.

Ashley sent out notices for the unpaid Real Estate and Personal Property taxes for those who have not paid. Ashley Prior corrected Mayor Persinger stating that this is only for Personal Property taxes. Mayor Persinger continued saying I guess the unpaid Real Estate taxes will come from Alleghany County. If you haven’t paid or if you don’t pay after so many years, they can put your property up for sale to get those back taxes.

Everyone is upset about the tax assessments unfortunately, there is nothing this council can do anymore than the Clifton Forge council could for their residents on Tuesday night. It is all in the hands of Alleghany County and the Board of Supervisors, it’s out of our hands. If you have any questions or concerns, you had until February 12th, but if you need clarification, you can still ask for an explanation.

I also have a form here that Alleghany Public Works Department uses. This is to allow our town crew to go onto residents’ property to pick up their trash for those who are unable to bring it to the alley. This is a form to protect our Public Works. Councilwoman Tyree asked for verification that this is what Alleghany County uses. Mayor Persinger responded yes, this is what Alleghany County uses, and the resident will have to bring the form to their doctor and have it signed as to why they cannot drop the trash in the back alley. Councilwoman Tyree states as long as this will cover us for liability. Vice Mayor Marshall reiterates that this will cover the guys and the town, Mayor Persinger states yes, that is correct. Vice

Mayor Marshall asked if the form is something we will need to show Jim Guynn. Mayor Persinger states right, we will have to show him and tweak it. Ashley and I will tweak it to fit Iron Gate and then we will send it to the attorney for his approval. Councilwoman Tyree stated that she would assume Mr. Guynn will already know about that form since he works for the county also. Mayor Persinger responded yes, he does.

I sent everyone a short notice on Tuesday and I apologize, I had just found out at three o'clock that day, that Clifton Forge had their FOIA training this past Tuesday evening. Ashley and I were able to go they had a really nice presentation. They also had a print out, we did not have a print out, I am going to touch base with Clifton Forge either tomorrow or one day next week and ask if we can get a copy.

There is a large calendar hanging on the door and Ashley and I have been writing down when there will be a work session, council meeting, agendas, meeting times with Thrasher. If you have a question about what is coming up you can look at that calendar. You can also look at the plastic sheeting that is in front of Ashley's desk that has the posted agenda for that month's meeting. We found out that we have to have an agenda for the work sessions and council meetings.

I want to commend our Public Works crew for the work they have done here in January and February with the snow and ice we had. They were out here with picks breaking up the ice so we could at least have a small amount of walk space so residents could get up the steps to town hall. Even without the liability notice they went into residents' yards and collected the trash due to not being able to get out of their back doors. I just want to thank them for all the work they do. I also want to thank Gary Nicely across the street from town hall. He pulled out his own snow blower and voluntarily started using it down the sidewalk before the Public Works crew had a chance. Gary said he was just doing it to be a good neighbor.

As everyone can see by Brandon's nameplate, he has agreed to be the Vice Mayor. I would like to thank him for that.

The tractor that is setting outside needs to have welding done on the blade. Doug Woodson from Eagle Rock did that for us. Mr. Woodson had to work on the tractor for around 7 hours due to the angle that needed welding. The tractor will be up and ready by spring.

Ashley is still dealing with the IRS and the refund they owe us.

I have reached out to Chris Fisher regarding the Robo calls that the school system has he said he will give my number to several people he works with in the school system to call me back. I have not heard anything yet. If I don't hear from anyone by the middle of next week I will call Chris again.

The sewer line on Tannery Rd is fixed. Junior and Trey dropped some of the sewer aid in front of Councilman Hardesty's house and also in front of Steve Vess' house. Junior has been monitoring it everyday and yesterday Junior stated that there was a good flow. Vice Mayor Marshall asked if the town is still going to do a preventative measure on that spot. Mayor Persinger stated if we can do it, yes. Vice Mayor Marshall asked how often would we need to do it or did they recommend anything. Mayor Persinger replied he said about once a month. In the upcoming months he may pour some sizzle (sewer aid) on 4th street, some on 8th street, and periodically drop it in the manhole to keep everything up and running. When we ordered the sewer aid, we ordered (5) 50-pound buckets from Engineering Chemistry in Covington. We are going to reimburse Clifton for the 2 they let us use.

This is the current bill that was sent to Western Virginia Water Authority for the water and sewage. I spoke with the Water Authority today and right now. They put in all new lines and meter; however, Iron

Gate is taking their word for what the reading is. I would like to have a backup system so we are looking at potentially putting in a 4x4 board with a meter attached, above ground, so we can have a check and balance system. Vice Mayor Marshall asked if the bill is for one month. Mayor Persinger said yes. Vice Mayor Marshall asked if it is just for nine houses. Mayor Persinger replied it is for more than just nine houses. Those nine are only paying for sewer, they have a spring and don't need water. Some are getting sewer and water. Ashley can explain it to you better.

I will call Clifton in March and schedule the bucket truck to come down in April to take the Christmas flags down, and put the spring flags up.

Barry Brown's daughter in law graciously donated a new American flag to the town. Councilwoman Tyree suggested looking into purchasing more of a weather proof American flag. Mayor Persinger stated that is something Ashley can check on. Amazon. I know when you purchase an American Flag, they have to made in the U.S.A.

I also want to thank all the residents who came in or stopped by regarding the Homer Clark property on Tannery Rd. I had several people call and tell me what the story was on that. There was a deed and now I have to call Homer Clark's son and see if he will bring a copy of that deed, so we can contact the real estate agent. Councilwoman Burrell asked who owned it and what was said. Mayor Persinger said the house that Homer Clark lives in, there is a little cement cylinders so far out in the yard. That is where his property line was but when they subdivided the alley that was there and gave him 5 feet and the other property owner 5 feet, he put 2 more of those cement cylinders on that line. His property line actually goes out to where those 2 cement cylinders are. If his son just has the deed for the land that went to the 1st cylinder, that originally belonged to him that is one thing. If he does not have a deed for that extra 5 feet, then we will need to research and Iron Gate may need to create a deed for that.

Jeff Irving was here last month and he mentioned that he wants to get the Intergovernmental Committee started again. Jennifer, I think he spoke with you and Brandon about that and wants to see if you are interested. Councilwoman Tyree responded that will depend on when they meet. Mayor Persinger said right. Again Neil, you and Norvella can also be on there, they want 2 people from each jurisdiction on there. I will let the 4 of you decide which 2 will have the seats. Vice Mayor Marshall stated I don't think I will have the time for it.

We have a website designer who handles our website. He charges 200 dollars a year on retainer, if he does anything, he charges 85 per hours or 250 dollars a month. I told Ashley to go back and find out when the contract with him was signed so we can find out when that expires. We can potentially find someone else that might do that at a cheaper rate. If we do not and we have to speak to him then we need to find out if he will prorate. I know nothing about the cost of web upkeep, so any information you all might have I will be interested in hearing what you have to say. Vice Mayor Marshall said I think it is pretty expensive. David Crosier said that is pretty standard, what you just said, those rates are pretty standard. Councilman Hardesty said so he is just watching basically, but if he has to do anything it will be 85 dollars an hour. Mayor Persinger replied correct. Councilman Hardesty asked how often is he getting on the site. Mayor Persinger replied from what I understand he hasn't been in there for quite a while because nothing has been said to him. Councilman Hardesty asked if he is going to update the website. Mayor Persinger replied there are some things that need to be put out there because by law they have to be out there. Ashley commented that she spoke to him today and was informed there are bugs in the system.

We received an email from Joe Dashiell wanting to conduct an interview regarding the lawsuit. We spoke with the attorney earlier this week. Our attorney said he would get in touch with channel 7 to set up a date and time, we will meet at the attorney's office and the attorney and myself will give a few words and it

will be done. The attorney said the town does not want to miss the opportunity to miss out on saying a few words on our behalf. That will one day next week or the week after.

There will be a progress report from the Thrasher Group on March 19th at 1:30 pm here at town hall. There will be representatives from Thrasher and Hammond – Mitchell. Any of council and residents are welcome to sit in.

I am going to go ahead and appoint the committees; I cannot afford to wait until we get 2 more people on here.

The mayor has spoken with Allen Leonard from Core and Main, he is going to check his schedule and come over. I will have Junior and Trey as well as any council and residents that wish to come. We are going to get some ideas for keeping the I & I out of the sewer lines.

Alleghany is doing their 2020-2026 budget. I sent a letter out by email to Melissa Munsey regarding a grant for the Parks & Recreation to see if they will be willing to give us the 2000 dollars.

Mayor Persinger moved on to Committee Reports.

Committee Reports:

Mayor Persinger stated we do not have any committee reports because we are not set up yet.

Public Comments:

Mayor Persinger asked if there were any Public Comments. Ashley asked Mr. Paul Handwerk. Mr. Handwerk commented I just think it is very informative what you just went over. It lets people really know what is going on. Mayor Persinger replied we are trying.

Mayor Persinger moved on to Old Business.

Old Business:

Mayor Persinger started with Councilman Richard Erskine's resignation letter. Councilwoman Tyree asked Mayor Persinger if she is going to read the letter to make it official. Mayor Persinger began reading.

This letter is dated January 1st, 2025

As of January 1st, 2025, I Richard B. Erskine resign from council of Iron Gate, VA 2448.

Richard B. Erskine

I know we have previously discussed ordering the roll of stamps for the cigarette taxes, we can order either 18 rolls which is half a case for 1,309.00, or we can order one quarter of a case which is 9 rolls of stamps for 654.75. We still have 4 rolls left. Vice Mayor Marshall asked if we will use half a case this year. Ashley responded that Layman's Candy Company usually comes every 3 to 4 months.

We still owe Alleghany County 5,126.19 dollars for the True-up amount. Based on what we have in the account, we set up a 6-month payment plan, with them, of 855 dollars on top of our monthly bill from February through July.

A plaque for the previous mayor Gary Craig and vice mayor Richard Erskine. Councilwoman Tyree asked if G.W. Reynolds or Debbie Harris would be recognized in any way. Mayor Persinger responded probably not for a plaque. Councilwoman Burrell asked if it is standard procedure to give previous mayors a plaque. Mayor Persinger said they have in the past. Councilman Hardesty asked if all of them received one. Councilwoman Burrell mentioned not the ones that resigned. Councilwoman Tyree said she is right, not the ones that have resigned. Mayor Persinger stated if they have resigned, I don't think they have gotten a plaque. Most of the mayors have been here for more than one term. Councilwoman Burrell asked if Gary finished his term. Councilman Hardesty responded no, he didn't. Councilwoman Tyree stated he was only 1 month short. Mayor Persinger continued I think the only reason a plaque for Richard would be appropriate is due to the number of years he served. He was here for 27 years and if he would have fulfilled his term, he would have had 2 more years added to that.

Mayor Persinger mentioned Hammond-Mitchell briefly. The form is referring to Hammond-Mitchell is just letting the town know the days they did not work. They did not work on January 21st and 24th due to low temperatures. Hammond-Mitchell also did not work on February 6th and 7th due to rain and flooding. They also did not work from February 11th through 14th due to 16" of snow.

We received 2 change orders from Hammond-Mitchell. The first one was completed in January and is from VDOT for the LUP Bond and the permit fees. The second change order is for the installation of CMP Culvert on Crescent Avenue near where Roger Balsler lives. The first pay application from Hammond-Mitchell is for 14,256.00, the second pay application is for 37,509.48, the third pay application is for 36,537.48. Councilwoman Tyree said this culvert was not anticipated. Mayor Persinger replied the one that was up there cracked and was in disarray so they had to replace it. We had not anticipated that and that is why they did a change order. Councilwoman Tyree verified the funds came from the ARPA funds. Mayor Persinger replied yes.

We were lucky enough to get in touch with Wayne Campbell. He helped with snow removal within the town where VDOT does not plow. Wayne agreed to be paid for \$25 per hour. Richard Neal assisted with snow removal using his backhoe for a day as well and also agreed to be paid \$25 per hour. Vice Mayor Marshall asked if the town had any ice melt before we had that freeze. Mayor Persinger stated I don't think so.

Council will need to vote on moving the 15,000-dollar Fire Department funds.

We also have three adjustments on the utility bills. Everyone has already looked over them and council will need to vote on them under new business.

Council will need to review the Proclamation for the MS Awareness month as well as the Proclamation that April is clean up month for the Alleghany Highlands.

The last thing under old business is for council to start the discussion to reduce the number of the Iron Gate Council seats from 6 down to 4. This will be a year to year and a half process, it will need to go to the General Assembly. Numerous Ads and meetings in the paper, if you all want to table it, I can certainly understand. It has taken us a while to go from 2 members up to 4 and we are still missing 2. Vice Mayor Marshall stated I think it's necessary, we're having such a hard time getting people as it is.

Mayor Persinger mentioned with that being said there are several people that are either not with us, or are no longer able to serve on the Iron Gate Parks and Rec committee. Councilwoman Tyree said getting back to the member of council having to go down to 4. I looked at the Virginia State Code 15.2-1400 Section B it says governing bodies shall be composed if not fewer the 3, not more than 11. We are good within that, but I believe that 6 members on council would be the best to make decisions. I feel like the more people, the more views, the more representation, but having no one come forward with interest, 2 members being appointed by a judge, which I thank them both for stepping up, reducing to 4 is something that will have to be inevitable. I also think under the Charter Chapter 3 with the Administration and Government, we need to add the Vice Mayor as an official position when we go to the General Assembly. Mayor Persinger replied we can check into that, we have to make sure that it does not take away his capacity to vote. Councilwoman Burrell asked if people don't come to the meetings, then how are they supposed to know. I didn't know, I only heard it through the grape vines. Mayor Persinger responded I though we had done everything we could do, we have placed ads in the paper, put it on Facebook, the back of the water bills, the Alleghany Journal is here, the Botetourt Recorder. Vice Mayor Marshall commented everything but going door to door.

Mayor Persinger moved on to New Business.

New Business:

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to accept Richard's letter of resignation. A motion was given by Vice Mayor Marshall, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to accept Richard Erskine's resignation.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to place an order for a quarter case (9 rolls) of cigarette stamps. A motion was given by Vice Mayor Marshall, and seconded by Councilwoman Tyree. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to place an order for 9 rolls of cigarette stamps.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve the monthly True-Up payment plan with Alleghany County. A motion was given by Councilman Hardesty, and seconded by Councilwoman Burrell. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve the monthly True-Up payment plan with Alleghany County.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve the 3 pay application and change orders for Hammond-Mitchell. A motion was made by Councilman Hardesty, and seconded by Councilwoman Tyree. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve the 3 pay applications and change orders for Hammond-Mitchell.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve purchasing a plaque for the previous mayor Gary Craig. A motion was made by Councilman Hardesty, and seconded by Councilwoman Tyree. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “No”
Councilwoman Burrell – “No”
Mayor Persinger – “No”

According to Virginia Code 15.2-1421 in the event of a tie, the governing body has elected the mayor to be the tie breaker.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve purchasing a plaque for longtime member Richard Erskine. A motion was made by Councilwoman Tyree, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve a plaque for longtime member Richard Erskine.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve the drawdown to Thrasher. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Marshall, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve the drawdown to Thrasher.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve to keep Wayne Campbell on standby for snow. A motion was made by Councilwoman Tyree, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve Wayne Campbell on standby for snow.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to disburse the \$15,000 funds to the Iron Gate Volunteer Fire Department. A motion was made by Councilman Hardesty, and seconded by Vice Mayor Marshall. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to disburse the \$15,000 funds to the Iron Gate Volunteer Fire Department.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve the utility adjustments. A motion was made by Councilman Hardesty, and seconded by Vice Mayor Marshall. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve the utility adjustments.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve March as MS Awareness month. A motion was made by Councilman Hardesty, and seconded by Councilwoman Burrell. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve March MS Awareness month.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to approve April as cleanup month. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Marshall, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to approve April as cleanup month.

Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to start discussing the process needed to reduce the council seat from 6 down to 4. A motion was made by Councilwoman Tyree, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”
Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”
Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”
Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

The motion carries unanimously to start the process of reducing the council seats from 6 down to 4.

Mayor Persinger asked if anyone in the audience has anything to add. Mr. Handwerk asked if council goes down to 4 members, how many will be a quorum. Mayor Persinger said if one is out, we would need 3 council members.

Mayor Persinger said the next Work Session will be March 17th at 7 pm. The Council Meeting will be March 27th at 7 pm.

Councilwoman Tyree commented before we get into anything else, I would like to make a motion to add the Vice Mayor into the discussion to our charter in an official capacity.

Mayor Persinger asked if anyone has anything else they would like to add. Ashley said I would like to circle back to the personal property tax notice that I sent out. If anyone in the town has any questions about their tax forms regarding a vehicle that shouldn't be on there, you will need to call Alleghany County and speak to the Commissioner of Revenue and they will need to send me an abatement.

Mayor Persinger said we are going to go into closed session under VA Code 2.2-3711 Item 7 to discuss legal and VA Code 2.2-3711 Item 4 to discuss personnel matters. We will not be voting on anything.

Mayor Persinger stated it is 9:34 pm and we are coming out of closed session and verifying we discussed nothing other than legal and personnel issues. Mayor Persinger asked for a motion to come out of closed

session and back into regular session. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Marshall, and seconded by Councilwoman Burrell. A roll call vote was taken.

Councilwoman Tyree – “Yes”

Vice Mayor Marshall – “Yes”

Councilman Hardesty – “Yes”

Councilwoman Burrell – “Yes”

Mayor Persinger said with no further business to discuss we are adjourning this meeting at 9:35 pm. asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was made by Councilwoman Tyree, and seconded by Councilman Hardesty.

The motion carried unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Kawahna C Persinger, Mayor

Ashley C Prior, Clerk