

**Infrastructure Committee  
Town of Independence  
Draft Minutes  
April 30, 2024**

Committee Members in Attendance: Jason Cassell, Chairman, Jim Meier, Buddy Halsey, Terry Osborne

Adhoc in Attendance: Laura Ratcliffe

- 1) Chairman Cassell welcomed everyone and noted there was a quorum.
- 2) The group reviewed the presented draft minutes from the March 2024 meeting. Jim Meier made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Buddy Halsey seconded. Minutes were approved.
- 3) Old Business:
  - a. Status of Trash Collection Quotes – Laura Ratcliffe
    - i. Town Manager Ratcliffe presented the optional quote received from GFL for trash collection services. The quoted price is in line with the current pricing (\$216 per year) and includes roll out bins (95 gal) for each residential account. It does not include large item pick up or recycling. In order to pay for either service (County or GFL), Council needs to decide if they will continue to cover 100% of the cost or to pass a portion onto the residential customers since the consumer utility tax no longer covers the cost of the trash collection. If council elects to go with GFL, there may be an issue with the county and use of the convenience centers. Town Manager Ratcliffe stated she had sent the preliminary contract to Atty Brooks for review and feedback. Council asked Ms. Ratcliffe to confirm with GFL that they would be willing to do the contract for a short term period to get onto a fiscal year date and then for four years. Infrastructure also recommended the budget reflect a \$5 per month (\$60 annual) billing to residential accounts and that going forward, Town would cover 75% of contract and remaining would be spread over residential accounts.
  - b. Current status of projects in process – Terry Osborne
    - i. Penn Court – project complete and in close out.
    - ii. Sewer I & I
      1. Bid received – summary included with meeting materials – Bid for approximately \$200k more than original estimate.
      2. Status of VRA funding – Ms. Ratcliffe reported she had requested additional funding from DEQ for the project and was awaiting a response. Additionally, she is waiting for a VRA approval for all funding. Rural Development Parity has not been approved at this date.
    - iii. Lead Assessment – Surveys coming in and Lane Engineering is loading into the software system.
    - iv. Town Park – Park is ready for Farmer’s Market opening day on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

- c. Water/Sewer Rate Recommendation – Council Meier updated the group on the discussion from the Finance Committee regarding rates for the upcoming year. The goal is to be at a breakeven, including monies set aside for future repairs/upgrades. The Finance Committee had requested the Town Manager create various options for rate structure which was distributed at the meeting for the Infrastructure members to review and discuss. After lengthy discussion, the committee requested Town Manager Ratcliffe create a rate structure based on an access fee that did not include water gallons plus a cost per gallon. The cost per gallon would be the same regardless of the amount. The committee also gave guidance on a set of “guiding principles” to be used for account management going forward. A copy of these are included with the minutes. Town Manager Ratcliffe to prepare the new rate options and present to the full council for final approval at the May 2<sup>nd</sup> budget meeting.
- d. 2025 Budget discussion - The committee discussed the priority of the following items for the upcoming budget year.
  - i. Lakeview/Grayson St PER – Per committee, this has to happen in the upcoming fiscal year. This has been an issue for many years and has needed to be resolved. It is included in the current proposed budget.
  - ii. Darco Pump Station
    - 1. Septic System – Terry Osborne reported a septic system would cost approximately \$3k. They still need to get VDH approval for the system. The Committee asked that he work to get VDH approval.
  - iii. Fire Station Hydrant Meter – Terry Osborne reported a hydrant meter would be \$2500 for an external hydrant. A process would have to be created to manage the usage. Councilman Halsey asked about adding meters to the fire department for their regular use. Mr. Osborne advised in order to add meters for internal use, waterline configurations would have to be changed because of how the building was originally built. No decision was made. The 2025 budget includes \$2500 for a hydrant meter.
  - iv. Capital for Buildings
    - 1. Police Station Roof Repair – Town Manager Ratcliffe indicated the proposed capital budget included the mid-range roof repair for the building. She had checked with the contractor and the pricing was still good. The group agreed this needed to be completed.
  - v. Property Swap – Town Manager Ratcliffe reported that she and Mr. Osborne and Mr. Weaver had toured the potential new public works location. The location would be an improvement over the current location from a size and accessibility perspective. The location would need some repairs and she was proposing \$7500 to be included in the budget. The next step in the process is to have the locations appraised and she is working to find an appraiser.
  - vi. VCWA Water Purchase – VCWA rates are increasing substantially this year due to end of life equipment repairs at the plant. VCWA does not have all funding needed to make the repairs and are passing a portion of the one time costs over to the Towns. Sparta will take a greater share than Independence. This increase is included in the rate calculations and budget.

- vii. Spend for replacement meters, etc. – Monies included in the budget for meter replacements.
  - e. Town Fiber/Phone Network – Town Manager reported that the following groups have voiced an interest in providing services in Town, including wi-fi hotspots in Town Park. Councilman Meier asked that we first identify what each owns before moving forward with additional services. Town Manager Ratcliffe will work on this and report back later in the year.
    - i. Lingo
    - ii. Citizens
    - iii. Gigabeam
- 4) New Business
  - a. 911 Project – Councilman Halsey indicated he saw an article referencing this project and asked that we invite Tom Revel to an Infrastructure Committee meeting in the future to discuss further.

There being no additional matters to discuss, Chairman Cassel adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.