

On Monday, March 11, 2024 the council meeting for the Town of Gay was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Walker. All members were present at roll call and it was determined a quorum did exist.

The first item was approval of the Agenda. Council member Askvig motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by council member Watts. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Next was the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a brief reminder of the rules of decorum.

Next, Susan Pritchett was sworn in as council member. Welcome and congratulations were given by all present.

Next was approval of the minutes from previous meetings.

Council Meeting – February 12, 2024:

Motion to approve council member Keith; second, council member Watts and vote in favor unanimous.

Public Hearing (Budgets) - February 20, 2024:

Motion to approve council member Watts; second, council member Askvig and vote in favor unanimous.

Work Session – February 20, 2024:

Motion to approve council member Watts; second, council member Askvig and vote in favor unanimous.

The first item on the agenda was a vote on the 2024/2025 Budgets and Resolution. There were no questions or discussion from any member of the public nor from any council members. Council member Watts motioned to approve the Budgets, seconded by council member Keith. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Next on the agenda was a presentation of information from Joe Nash about an upcoming Country Music Concert special event to be held at the Longleaf grounds. Council members had several questions regarding parking, food and alcohol service, and hours of operation.

Longleaf is requesting closing Tom Mann Road for safety and security reasons during the event, which will be June 12, 2024. The set up for the event is expected to be on Wednesday through Saturday and the actual concert is projected to end at approximately 11:00 p.m.

He said they are asking the county to help with getting DOT message boards warning of upcoming "Heavy Traffic" prior to this event.

Joe said they are also considering another event in September, similar to Cirque de solei with no live animals nor any rides, but stage based acrobatics, magic acts and such. This has not been contracted yet, but he asked if the Town might consider exempting this type event from Special Event fees. He was not asking for an immediate answer, only as a point to consider for the future, if it should actually be scheduled.

Next on the agenda was Rat Road. This road is in very bad condition, due to heavy rains. Some parts are washed out and the Mayor wants to consider using T-Splost funds to repair, gravel and/or paving. The rain also exposed a water line which needs buried also. This line appears to have been placed some time much earlier when there were actually a few houses on Rat Road. There are currently none still standing. Our newly sworn-in council member, Susan Pritchett, is the proud owner of a GPR unit and volunteered to trace the line and find where it actually runs.

Mayor Walker presented a map showing the area in question. Our T-Splost account is at approximately \$16,900.

Clerk will check the Comprehensive Plan to see if there is any way the county should or would help with the repairs/paving needs.

Council member Watts did some research on the DOT LMIG grant, with no matching funds required, which we can still apply for even though it has closed. On Wednesday, clerk will check with the DOT for more information.

The next item Mayor Walker brought up was ways to increase funding for the Town. He presented documents showing our current water and trash rates and how much a small increase in rate, and decrease in minimum usage could benefit the Town. After discussion, council member Askvig motioned to begin the advertisement and meetings necessary to put this increase into effect. The motion was seconded by council member Watts and the vote in favor was unanimous.

Council member Keith asked if those who pay minimum water bills but actually have no water connection could be exempted from this increase. Former Mayor Nash was in attendance and stated the law in effect at the time of our water loan and grant were made, because Gay is such a small town, everyone had to agree to pay the same or the Town would not qualify get the water system. Inquiries can be made to determine if any changes

have been made but it is noted we are still paying on the original loan and terms have probably not been changed.

The next item on the agenda was ARPA Funds. We have approximately \$8067 in our account. By law, this money must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. Some items suggested are new roof on the Community Building, wiring and garage doors (with locks) on the storage/garage area of City Hall. This will be discussed more at the next scheduled council meeting.

The next discussion was the recent closing of all three railroad crossing in Gay as well as the one just south of the Town limits. It was recommended that the Mayor contact Rep. Debbie Buckner. She is no longer our representative but was a tremendous help in getting this same situation corrected previously. She was able to set up a meeting with railroad officials and Town representative. Possibly railroad officials have changed or for some other reason the crossings are again all being closed at one time.

This is a serious safety concern for all residents in or near Gay. These crossings are the only immediate link to emergency help for anyone who has the misfortune of being on the "Other side of the tracks" when any emergency occurs and is totally unacceptable.

The Town has an ordinance stating it is illegal to block the crossings in town for more than ten (10) minutes. A previous council had set a fine at \$500.00 per event but there is no information as to how issue the fine nor how to enforce it. Council will continue to search for ways to correct this dangerous situation.

Next, council member Watts said she has been informed by the sheriff's office that for the upcoming spring fairs, there will be 8 deputies available. Council and two craft fair representatives who were present discussed past issues with the deputies doing what we actually want them to do. The general consensus was to continue with six deputies. Council member Watts, who coordinates with the sheriff's department, said there needs to be a meeting with Byron Headley for that purpose but last year, nobody from that office showed up to the meeting.

The last item for discussion was information on the Keep Meriwether Green clean up date. The date scheduled is April 27 but there was not yet any information as to where dumpsters will be located. Mayor Walker and

council member Watts will meet and see if a suitable place can be located on Town property.

The next item for discussion was financial documents. After noticing some discrepancies in figures, not all of which clerk had no answers for, council member Watts motioned to postpone discussion until next council meeting, seconded by council member Askvig. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Council member Watts asked to make a special statement. A prominent local resident, Mr. Arthur Estes, recently passed away and council member Watts paid tribute to him and his year's long contribution to the Town of Gay, remembering him as a dear friend.

As there was no more business to discuss, council member Watts motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Council member Keith seconded the motion and the vote favor was unanimous.

Christopher Walker – Mayor

Sharon Richmond - Clerk