

TOWN OF GLASGOW

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Fellow Citizens of Glasgow,

As you may already be aware, Mayor Wayne Armstrong resigned on April 19, 2018. As stated in our town ordinance, his job duties fell to the Recorder, me, Peggy Fisher. I was sworn in on April 24, 2018 by the President of the Kanawha County Commission, Kent Carper, pending the council's approval and appointment as mayor. On May 7, 2018, our council members appointed me as the mayor of Glasgow until the next election in June 2019.

Let me introduce myself to those who may not know me. The Powell family moved here in 1958 when I was 3 years old. My family consisted of my Dad & Mom, Jack & Deloris, a sister, Cathy, 2 brothers, Jack & David, and myself. We lived on Glasgow Avenue for several years then moved to 211 5th Avenue. I moved away in 1978 when my husband and I married. I moved back with my two children, Jessica & Andrew, in 1990 and have been here ever since in the same house I grew up in. My mother still lives here in the house next door to me. I remember, fondly, a time when kids played harmlessly until the street lights came on and then, it was time to go home. I remember finding out the hard way, that my parents were made fully aware of what I had done well before I got home and *there were consequences* to my actions. I remember the fire whistle going off nightly giving notice of the 10PM curfew. I remember parades, the annual fireman's festivals, bingo, Friday evenings for kids at the old town hall that were supervised by adult volunteers and summer splash parties. I know that that was several years ago but, I think we can re-foster a similar sense of "neighbor-watching-out-for-neighbor" and a close-knit community again.

I am a Christian and am a member and regularly attend Glasgow United Methodist Church. I'm also a grandmother, a retired RN/Nurse Practitioner of 30+ years, a dog owner, and I have only the best interest of the Town of Glasgow in my heart. I am neither a politician nor politically correct on most occasions. But, I am honest in that I say what I mean and mean what I say. It's not always the most popular stance, but I *must* be true to Him and to myself. I try not to gossip and if you want to know what I'm thinking or what I'm up to, just ask me. I'll always be truthful and if I don't know the answer, I'll do my best to find out.

So, now that introductions are out of the way, let me outline what I see as the top priorities for our community.

We must get a handle on our revenues and expenditures!

1. In 2013, the previous administration announced the pending closure of the AEP plant in Glasgow. Our disposable income came to a screeching halt as of 2016. Our last pay out from utility property taxation was a settlement of just over \$100,000. In the years previous, we had received between \$350,000 and \$400,000 per year just from utility property taxes. That amount does not include the B&O taxes we lost from the contractors and the constant construction and repairs that went on at the plant. This amounted to an additional \$150,000-\$200,000 of yearly income. **This fiscal year, we received a mere \$1889 in utility property tax.**

- My understanding is that there have been discussions with AEP about the property which is about 10 acres. AEP claims they're are in "negotiation" with a potential buyer and have plans to tear down the old plant. However, this may take 2 years or more to even begin implementation. Furthermore, I'm not entirely sure of the reliability or even the credibility of this "plan."

2. Some effort has already been taken to slow spending. However, the priority of a fully staffed and outfitted 24-7 police force, providing healthcare benefits to our fulltime employees, maintenance of our streets and sidewalks, grass mowing, storm drain and sewer clean outs, fire hydrant maintenance, a fire truck payment and utilities for all departments are costly. We have the same bills, but not the same income.
3. In 2017, we were informed by our insurance provider that due to several very expensive payouts for legal expenses and claims prior to this administration, our town is now considered "high risk" and our insurance premium went from \$39,000 to \$256,000/year. This was the main, and only, reason we had to ask the Glasgow Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. to obtain their own liability insurance. It was a measure to cut costs to the town.
4. The swimming pool has been named as a cost center that might be eliminated. I feel very strongly about this recreational facility and consider it a very integral part of our community. Several people, including many of our young people, are employed there, not to mention it gives our young people a positive environment to be in and keeps them from swimming in the river. In the 1960's, when the decision was made to build the pool, keeping kids from swimming in the river was the main concern, as there had been many adults and kids who had drowned in the Kanawha river while swimming.

- In addition, the Office of Child Nutrition Summer Program Food Services (SPFS) allows us to cost effectively provide a free lunch and snack to every child to the age of 18 years. Our school district reports that 85-90% of our school-age children qualify for free or reduced cost lunches. West Virginia DHHR has reported that 1 in 5 children go hungry in our state. This SPFS program allows us to seamlessly continue the lunch program while school is out. We are reimbursed for every lunch and snack we serve. We have been providing an average of 40 lunches and snacks per day during the summer months for the last 2 years and are approved for the program for this summer.
- I have, for last two years, *volunteered* my time and I will continue to *volunteer* my time at the pool *for the kids*. It's another way of my giving back to the community. If you would like to volunteer and help with preparing and serving the free lunch program, please feel free to give me a call. It would be most appreciated.

So, what lies in our future?

1. ***First and foremost***, if we want the same level or near the same level of service, we, the citizens, are going to have to be willing to make some very hard, unpopular and, potentially, costly decisions.
 - a. Currently, with the newest water rate increase, we are charging \$33.77 per 3400 gallons of water, which is considered average usage. To be considered for grant funding, we must have rates that reflect 1.5% of Glasgow's Median Household Income, or MHI, of \$31,458 based on the 2010 U.S. Census results. To meet that requirement, our rates need to be at \$39.32 per 3400 gallons. That's means the possibility of an additional 16% increase to our water and sewer rates to qualify for funding necessary to replace/repair our water system.
 - i. Our current water system, was for the most part, built in the 1930's the other section in the 1960's. We are currently losing 40-60% of the water we purchase from Cedar Grove Water plant into the ground (to put that into perspective, over the last 8 years, this equates to a body of water the size of Lake Stephens in Beckley, WV). There is no one main leak or even several small leaks that can be identified, the entire system is literally leaking like a sieve. The WV Public Service Commission (WV PSC) gives 15% as an acceptable water loss. In order to be compliant with the WV PSC, we must show we are working towards correcting this deficit. Here is what is currently being done:
 - a. We are currently in discussions with West Virginia American Water regarding the buyout of our water utility services. That is certainly an option to generate revenue, but it is not something I want, and I am very much against. Current WV American rates are \$60.28 per 3400 gallons and they have recently requested a

24% increase which would take it to \$74.75 per 3400 gallons for water alone.
That's 53% more than what Glasgow Water Department would be charging
even with the additional 16% increase.

b. In the summer of 2016, we had several meetings and hand delivered surveys that were taped to every home's front door giving several alternatives to repairing our antiquated water system. Those that responded, showed an overwhelming support in favor of the specialty hydro-excavation truck purchase as opposed to the traditional construction method especially due to its various and wide-ranging usefulness. In summary:

- We bid and interviewed 4 engineering firms and decided on Potesta Engineering which estimated the cost of replacement at approximately \$7 million, 2/3 of that cost reflected replacing asphalt. At this time, funding was limited or absent, and we would have had to take millions of dollars in loans mostly in the form of 30 years bonds. Obtaining grant funding would, again, still have required increasing water rates to meet 1.5% of our MHI.
- In December 2017, we purchased a hydro-excavation truck to better serve the community with regards to storm drain and sewer line clean outs and repair of broken water lines. Keeping the sewer lines flushed out will increase the life of our system by 10-20 years. Also, this truck can be used in replacing our old system, with minimal water stoppage and minimal re-asphalting. The cost for pipe, valves, etc. would be approximately \$2 million. A minimal amount of asphalt would have to be replaced and we are currently seeking estimates from multiple paving companies. So, instead of the long term borrowing of the majority of \$7 million for the traditional route of water line replacement, we can potentially do it for less than half that amount.

b. On May 10th, I have a meeting with members of the Regional Intergovernmental Council and representatives of Congressman Alex Mooney to discuss possible funding options to replace our aging water system on our own. But, again, funding will require increasing water rates to meet the 1.5% MHI of Glasgow residents.

- c. John Qualls, Director of Public Works, and I are currently negotiating a partnership with Carver Career Center to possibly provide apprentice plumbers to help with the replacement of old water pipes.
2. This month, we turned over \$109,000 worth of water/sewer/garbage and infrastructure assessment arrears to a collection agency. This agency can also trace people who left owing us and they have their own attorneys, if necessary, to pursue collections legally. We should be able to recoup 50-60% of these arrears, which, is better than what we were recouping: 100% of nothing.
 - a. Households that have had water & sewer disconnected but are still living in their homes are still residents of the town of Glasgow and are still getting their garbage picked up (as a courtesy to their neighbors). These households will continue to receive a monthly garbage and infrastructure assessment fee bill. If that obligation is not met, it too will be turned over to the collection agency.
3. The infrastructure assessment fee of \$15/month for the next 6 months with an increase to \$25.00/month was approved by council in June 2017. We just delayed implementing it until April 2018.
 - a. Infrastructure is defined as the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (for example: buildings, roads, sidewalks, boat dock, utilities and supplies) needed for the operation of this town.
 - b. This will produce the much-needed revenue for our infrastructures maintenance and repair of approximately \$27,000 for 1st 6 months then \$90,000 a year.
 - c. It will be deposited into the General Fund but will have a separate account where we can accurately track those revenues and expenditures.
4. We have purchased our own garbage truck with plans of generating income from that venture. We recently contracted with the nursing home for trash pickup at a higher commercial rate. However, the \$8/month we are currently charging residents does not come close to covering the cost of personnel, fuel and/or landfill costs involved in the Friday pick up or the additional 3-day per week trash pickup. I've calculated, based on the above-mentioned costs, the town is losing \$6.45 per customer per month. That amounts to an approximate loss of \$24,000/year.
 - a. To break even (which does not include the cost of the new truck) we would need to increase our garbage rates to at least \$18/month to recoup the cost of operation and to generate a bit of extra revenue for unexpected costs such as repair and maintenance of the trucks.

This is only a few of my thoughts and concerns and I assure you, I take no pleasure in writing this letter. As I said, I'm not a politician so I'm not going to tell anybody what I think they want to hear or gloss over the facts. What is *MOST* important to me, is saving my hometown from turning into another dark spot in the Upper Kanawha Valley.

I, nor the council, can or want to make any of these decisions without the input of our constituents! We need and want your help and input in making these hard decisions and unfortunately, its sink or swim time for Glasgow. None of us can do this on our own, *we need each and every member of this community to be involved!*

The council meets every 3rd Monday of the month and we would be overjoyed to see you at the meetings! If you have any positive suggestions or any possible solutions for our towns financial dilemma or any other challenges we face, your input and involvement will be most welcome and appreciated! Our council meetings, from here on out, should be brain storming sessions for Glasgow citizens on how to advance, improve and enhance our community. With that being said, we desperately need to pull together as friends and neighbors and unite around our town's future. The time for finger pointing and complaining has past and we must now wipe the slate clean of any hard feelings or any animosity that may exist between us and come together in a spirit of cooperation, forgiveness and unity. We desire to hear your ideas and thoughts on meeting the challenges that lie ahead of us. We need to pull together as concerned residents and neighbors and get real about our town's future.

If we want to continue to live in the Glasgow we long for: A nice little residential community with great police and fire protection, well maintained streets and sidewalks, a successful water/sewer system, community facilities and community events that draw us closer together as neighbors... then please: **Join me and your council at 7PM, Monday evening, June 18th in the Town Hall Gymnasium.** Be a part of us as we begin taking the steps necessary in developing a strategy for the continued strength and well-being of our town!

Respectfully,



Peggy S. Fisher