

TOWN OF GROTTUES
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSESSION AGENDA
May 13, 2024
6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER – MAYOR PLASTER

1. Closed Session pursuant to section 2.2-3711(A)7 for consultation with legal counsel and 2.2-3711(A)5 for discussion of a prospective business where no previous announcement has been made of the business for interest in locating in the community.

2. Discussion of FY25 Proposed Annual Budget

TOWN OF GROTTOS
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA
May 13, 2024
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER – MAYOR PLASTER

ROLL CALLING – DEPUTY CLERK WHETZEL

WELCOME CITIZENS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MEETINGS OF APRIL 8, 2024.

RECESS REGULAR MEETING

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. FY 24-25 Annual Budget and Proposed Fee Schedule
 - Staff Presentation
 - Speaking FOR
 - Speaking AGAINST
 - Council Comments

ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING AND RETURN TO REGULAR MEETING

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (PUBLIC COMMENT)

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Finance – Council member Raynes, Chair
 - a. ACTION - Approval of Financial Reports
2. Water and Sewer – Council member Bailey, Chair
3. Ordinance, Health, and Property – Council member Kohl, Chair
 - a. ACTION – Ordinance to amend Chapter 144 Article IX – Cigarette Tax
 - b. ACTION - Ordinance to amend Chapter A171 – Fees
4. Streets and Street Lights – Council member Justis, Chair
5. Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities – Council member Chittum, Chair

6. Special Events - Council member Leeth, Chair
7. Personnel, Fire and Police Protection – Mayor Plaster, Chair

STAFF REPORTS:

1. Town Manager
2. Town Attorney
3. Treasurer
4. Assistant to Town Manager
5. Police Chief
6. Public Works Director
7. Parks and Tourism Director

NEW BUSINESS

1. Remote Participation Policy
2. Economic development escrow funds

OLD BUSINESS

ADJOURN

RULES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

Persons wishing to speak at the hearing must sign-up prior to the start of the meeting.

The Council/Commission/Board will hear up to 3 speakers from each side (FOR/AGAINST).

Each speaker is limited to 3 minutes, whether speaking on behalf of a group or as an individual.

Repetitive testimony is discouraged.

All comments shall be directed to the Town Council. Debate is prohibited.

Mayor/Chairman shall have the authority to end a presentation that violates these rules.

April 8, 2024

A work session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, April 8, 2024, at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the work session of April 8, 2024, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Mayor Jo Plaster, David Raynes, Joshua Bailey, Eddie Chittum, Tim Leeth, Jim Justis, and Michael Kohl.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Attorney Michael Helm, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Clerk Tara Morris, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

Mayor Plaster said the first item for discussion is a request for lot line revision. Clerk Morris said we received a request for lot line revision from Josh Holloway. She said the property is located on Edgewood Street and is zoned B-3, which allows business and residential. Clerk Morris said the property meets all the code requirements for a buildable lot. She said the lot with his house is still over 20,000 square feet and the lot he wants to subdivide is over 14,000 square feet. Clerk Morris said the town requires 12,000 square feet and 100 foot of road frontage, which both lots have. Manager McAlister added that the planning commission reviewed the request and recommended it to the council for approval. Clerk Morris said this is on the regular meeting agenda under new business.

Mayor Plaster said the next item on the agenda is the FY25 draft budget discussion. Manager McAlister said she had met with the Finance Committee to review the budget and discuss some shortfalls within the water and sewer funds. Manager McAlister reviewed the proposed FY24-25 budget with the Council. She said the committee agreed that the water and sewer base rates would need to be increased. Manager McAlister said the water and sewer base rates have only increased once since 2011. She said the Finance Committee suggested raising the meals tax to 6% and the cigarette tax to \$0.30 per pack. Council member Bailey asked why we weren't doing a cola and merit-based raise, like he suggested last year. Manager McAlister said no guidelines or goals toward working for a merit-based raise have been established and suggested that if the council wants to establish a merit based system, perhaps the personnel committee could work on that. Mayor Plaster said the personnel committee will meet to establish these for next year if that's the direction council wants to go.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

April 8, 2024

A regular session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, April 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the regular session of April 8, 2024, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Plaster asked for a roll call.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Eddie Chittum, Joshua Bailey, Jim Justis, Mayor Jo Plaster, David Raynes, Michael Kohl, and Tim Leeth.

Other Town Officials present: Attorney Michael Helm, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Clerk Tara Morris, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director A.J. Hummel, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Leeth, and carried by a vote of 5-0-1, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – ABSTAINED; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; Leeth - AYE the Council approved the minutes of the March 11, 2024, meetings and vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; Leeth - AYE for the meeting on March 20, 2024. Council member Justis abstained from the March 11, 2024 meetings due to being absent.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (public comment)

Scott Sacra addressed the council with concerns to the FY25 proposed budget. He said he doesn't like the 5% across the board for raises. He said it should be merit based because some people may not deserve that much of a raise. He said he doesn't feel the town should increase the water and sewer base rates by 20% and give the employees a 5% raise. Mr. Sacra said he feels that the residents should be able to opt out of trash collection and that he would be glad to take his trash down to the county site.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEE:

FINANCE – Council member Raynes made a motion, seconded by Council member Leeth and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS- AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE, to approve the financial reports for the month of March 2024.

WATER AND SEWER – no report

ORDINANCE, HEALTH, AND PROPERTY – no report

STREET AND STREET LIGHTS – Council member Justis said the streets committee met and will be installing stop signs on Forest Avenue at 10th Street in May

PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES – no report

SPECIAL EVENTS – Council member Leeth said Chief Charlie’s Kids Fish Day will be on May 4, 2024 and the committee will be meeting in April to work on the Party in the Park that is scheduled in June.

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION – Mayor Plaster said the personnel committee will be meeting to set guidelines and goals for merit base raises.

STAFF REPORTS

TOWN MANAGER. Manager McAlister said her report was the draft budget and executive summary and it was reviewed at the work session.

ATTORNEY. No report.

TREASURER. Treasurer Danner said the 2021 audit is almost complete. She said she is waiting for the final checklist.

ASSISTANT TO TOWN MANAGER. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

POLICE CHIEF. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

PUBLIC WORKS. Public Works Director Hummel said they have been installing the new radio read meters and have approximately 100 installed. He also said they will having training on the system on April 24th.

RECREATION AND TOURISM DIRECTOR. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

NEW BUSINESS

Lot Line Revision – Council member Leeth made a motion to move forward the request from Josh Holloway for lot line revision. Attorney Helm asked Council member Leeth to amend the motion to approve or deny. Council member Leeth amended the motion to approve the request for lot line revision from Josh Holloway. Seconded by Council member Justis and carried by a vote of 5-0-1 voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – ABSTAINED; JUSTIS- AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE. Council member Bailey abstained due to the property being owned by a family member.

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Mayor

Clerk

Ordinance, Health + Property - a.

ORDINANCE TO AMEND

**CHAPTER 144 ("Taxation"), Article IX ("Cigarette Tax")
Section 64 ("Levy and Rate")**

OF THE GROTTOS TOWN CODE

WHEREAS, by Ordinance duly adopted, the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes, Virginia adopted Chapter 144, Taxation, of the Grottoes Town Code, which chapter has been amended from time to time; and

WHEREAS, upon mature consideration the Town Council has determined it is in the best interest of the Town to further amend said Chapter.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED and ordained by the Town Council of Grottoes, Virginia, that Chapter 144 (Taxation), Article IX (Cigarette Tax), Section 64 (Levy and Rate) is hereby amended to read as follows:

§144-64. Levy and rate.

In addition to all other taxes of every kind now or hereinafter imposed by law, there is hereby levied and imposed by the Town upon every person who sells or uses cigarettes within the Town from and after the effective date of this article an excise tax in such amount as set forth in accordance with Chapter A171, and as otherwise authorized by the Virginia Code, for each package of cigarettes. The tax shall be paid and collected in the matter and at the time hereinafter prescribed; provided that the tax payable for each cigarette package sold or used within the Town shall be paid but once. The tax hereby levied shall not apply to free distribution of sample cigarettes in packages containing five or fewer cigarettes.

Except as amended above, Chapter 144 of the Grottoes Town Code shall remain in full force and effect.

This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the passage hereof as provided by Virginia Law.

Adopted on this ____ day of _____, 2024.

Mayor, Jo Plaster

ATTEST: _____
Town Clerk

Ordinance, Health + Property - b.

ORDINANCE TO AMEND

**CHAPTER A171 ("FEES")
OF THE GROTTOS TOWN CODE**

WHEREAS, by Ordinance duly adopted, the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes, Virginia adopted Chapter A171, Fees, of the Grottoes Town Code, which chapter has been amended from time to time; and

WHEREAS, upon mature consideration the Town Council has determined it is in the best interest of the Town to further amend said Chapter.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED and ordained by the Town Council of Grottoes, Virginia, that the schedules set forth in Chapter A171 (Fees) are hereby repealed in full and Chapter A171 is hereby amended to read as follows:

Chapter A171 – Fees

The Town Council shall annually, before the 30th day of June, adopt a schedule of fees, charges and expenses that are imposed by the Town. The adopted schedule shall set forth the specific rates adopted by the Town for those taxes and fees authorized in Chapter 144 of the Town Code.

The adopted fee schedule shall further set forth all Administrative fee schedules, Zoning and Planning fee schedules, Facility fee schedules, Grand Caverns fee schedules, Public Works Labor fees, Water and Sewer rates and fees, as well as any other fee or tax otherwise authorized and adopted by the Town.

Such fee schedule shall be duly adopted by the Town Council each year, and a copy of the schedule shall be made publicly available at the Town Office.

Except as amended above, the Grottoes Town Code shall remain in full force and effect.

This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the passage hereof as provided by Virginia Law.

Adopted on this ____ day of _____, 2024.

Mayor, Jo Plaster

ATTEST: _____
Town Clerk



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Stefanie McAlister, Town Manager
DATE: May 13, 2024
SUBJECT: Staff Report

1. Remote Participation Resolution

The Code of Virginia § 2.2-3708.3. Meetings held through electronic communication means, which allows, under certain circumstances, members of a public body to use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person. The code also states that before a public body allows this, they must adopt a policy. Grottoes did this in April 2020. At this time our town attorney has notified us that the policy is to be renewed each year. An action item for the May meeting will be to adopt a resolution allowing for remote participation of Grottoes' public body members. A copy of the resolution is included in your packet and is on the agenda under new business.

2. Comprehensive Plan Update

The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) continues to work with the Comprehensive Plan Committee to update the town's plan. We are currently in the feedback gathering stage and have a survey out for citizens, neighboring residents, visitors, etc. to complete. So far, we have received over 230 responses. On Thursday, May 16th, from 5-7PM the PDC and comprehensive plan committee will hold an open house at Town Hall. We encourage citizens to attend the open house where they can learn more about the plan's purpose and to provide feedback into the process.

3. John Painter Park Pavilion

The pavilion at the park, known as the chicken shack where the GVFD sells their famous chicken, is having issues caused by settling. As the ground below continues to shift and settle the building is also shifting and will require some foundational repairs. The town is working with R&L Construction whose engineer has inspected the structure and devised a plan to stabilize it. Once the foundational repairs are complete, town staff will inspect the building and concrete that it sits on, to see what repairs are necessary.

4. Water and Sewer Projects

Engineer Rob Mangrum continues to make progress on site design for the area of the third well and for the wastewater treatment plant evaluation report. For the 3rd well the water line route has been determined and the design phase is nearly complete. Following that we will move into the construction preparation phase. The WWTP report is expected to be completed at the end of the month.

Treasurer's Staff Report May 2024

Audit

I am currently working on the final request list of items needed for FY21. This will be followed by final review questions. I expect this to be completed by the end of this month.

Maximum Investment Sweep Account

For the month of April, we have earned \$7,681.67 in interest. The interest rate was 2.40%.

Taxes

The revenue totals below are as of April 30, 2024:

Real Estate: \$283,000 Budgeted: 109% Collected \$309,465
Personal Property: \$87,908 Budgeted: 104% Collected \$91,781
Vehicle License Fee: \$45,000 Budgeted: 107% Collected \$48,928

Utility Billing

Billing Period: 2/15/2024 – 4/15/2024
Billing Date: 5/5/2024
Due Date: 6/5/2024
Total Billing: \$185,182.25
Bills Generated: 1006
Bills Emailed: 372

Accounts Payable

Date: April 2024
Number of Checks: 69
Total March AP Expense: \$120,294.67

Business License

Business license renewal letters were mailed 4/1/2024. Business licenses are due yearly on July 1.

Total revenue as of April 30, 2024:

Business Licenses: \$93,000 Budgeted: 63% Collected \$58,289

Golf Cart Decals

Golf cart decals went on sale March 1. If residents wish to operate their cart in the town limits, they must be inspected by our police department and a decal displayed by April 15, 2024. There has been a total of 23 decals sold so far this year.



**Land Development Staff Report
May 2024**

Zoning Permits issued (April 2024)

- 5 Permits
- 3 Single-Family
- 0 Town houses
- 1 Patio remodel
- 1 Carport

2024 total to date

17 Total Permits
2024 Total Dwellings
7 Single-Family
0 Townhouse units

Forest Station - (21st Street) – Construction of the first group of six townhouses continues.

Cherry Street Townhouses - Construction continues for the Cherry Street Townhouses.

R-7 Zoned area east of Cherry Avenue – Single family residential development continues. The developers are running all service lines and constructing the roads to state standards. This development is not considered a subdivision since the streets are already platted and the developer is following the town code for zoning and land use.

700 Dogwood Avenue – Construction is underway at 700 Dogwood Avenue. This is an approved conditional use permit allowing for a building containing a commercial store front with a two-family residential back.

Aspen Avenue Apartments – The developer for the Aspen Avenue apartments has reached out to staff about changing the project from a six-unit apartment building to a duplex. Staff has received the plans for a duplex and has contacted the developer with a few changes that need to be made.

Respectfully submitted:
Tara Morris, Assistant to Town Manager

Grottoes Police Department

Staff Report

May 2024

Staffing

	Authorized	Filled	Vacant
Chief	1	1	0
Sergeant	1	1	0
Officer	4	2	2

Ofc. T.L. Good has been released to solo patrol and has been assigned to a patrol shift. One uncertified applicant has been made a job offer. We are waiting for the applicant to accept the offer.

Sgt. Knight is still assigned to a Daylight patrol shift.

Part-time officers continue to cover open patrol shifts.

Chief Sullivan continues to fill in on patrol shifts to cover time off requests and vacant shifts caused by assigned training.

DMV Grants:

Department of Motor Vehicles Grant that was awarded to the police department for increased traffic enforcement is going well. A majority of the violations that have occurred are STOP sign violations.

We are applying for this grant again this year. The equipment that we will requesting is an Eagle III Radar unit to replace aging Eagle II radar unit on top of the awarded reimbursement for fuel and wages paid while officers work under the grant guidelines,

Special Events

The police department along with members of the Town maintenance assisted with Road closers for the Caverns 5K race that was held on April 26, 2024. The race was completed without any problems.

Chief Charles's Kids Fish Day was held on May 4. With the assistance of 4 volunteers from the Town Council, one employee from the Parks Department, Girl Scout Troop 592, and the Grottoes Fire Department auxiliary the event went well. Attendance at the event was low this year but that is attributed to the weather.

Respectfully submitted:
Jason Sullivan
Chief of Police.

May 2024

PUBLIC WORKS STAFF REPORT

Staffing	Authorized	Filled	Vacant
Public Works Director	1	1	0
Asst. Public Works Director	1	1	0
Public Works Crew Leader	1	1	0
Public Works Tech	5	4	1
Wastewater Treatment Operator	1	1	0
Part-Time Seasonal Laborer	3	1	2

Brady Dodson has been hired as a technician. Supervisory Staff is working to fill the remaining Tech position.

Director Hummel's last day is May 17th. The open position will be advertised this week.

STREETS

The new development for the 100 block of 14th Street has been paved. This work was performed by Smith's Paving and was inspected by Town Staff to ensure that it meets VDOT specifications.

WATER AND SEWER

Septic Tanks

Staff continues to pump septic tanks per the schedule. In the future, we will be pumping businesses in town with higher sewer usage (i.e., restaurants and convenience stores) more frequently, once a year, at a minimum. Since our system is designed differently than a typical residential septic tank and drain field system, pumping should not be required as frequently as a traditional tank and drain field system. However, the staff is working to ensure that all tanks are inspected every 5 years, and a log citing the condition of the tank is kept.

Wastewater Plant

The town's engineer Rob Mangrum has been evaluating the equipment and processes at the WWTP. At the end of this month a compiled report will be provided. From that report staff and the water and sewer committee will need to review the plan, evaluate the

findings and determine a path for improvements and implementation including ability to finance and adjustments or upgrades.

Water

Town staff has determined where valve insertion should occur. We will be working with a contractor in the coming months to install valves on some 2-inch and 8-inch main lines including along Dogwood Ave and 6th Street. Once installed this will allow staff to isolation parts of the system to more easily repair leaks without having to shut water off to larger portions (or all) of Town. This project was previously approved by Council.

Our staff is updating the GIS map of the utilities whenever a new asset is found or is worked on. During the preparation for valve insertion, several lines and valves have been located that we were previously unaware of.

We continue to work with Engineer, Rob Mangrum with plans to get the 3rd well connected to the water system.

New construction

The Public Works Department conducts inspections for all new water, sewer, and street installations throughout town. As we all know there is a lot of construction around town. The town staff is always looking and trying to plan on the water and sewer service increases. R&L construction is also in full swing of building houses on 16th.St. Kenny May is in the process of construction on 14th St.

VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

The department supplies preventative maintenance for the Town's equipment and vehicles, including the police department.

PARKS AND FACILITIES

Public works staff are working with Parks & Tourism staff to get projects at both parks completed. With the hiring of Park Ranger 2s, we will be working on training these staff members to ensure that they're up to date on procedures and safety information.

4/1/2024	Maintenance	Caverns	DS, BD, TB	Pine Tree Fell	Work up Fallen Tree	Parks	2 Hrs.
4/1/2024	Maintenance	89 Cary Street	LR, JS	Replace Meter Setter	Install Water Meter and Setter	Water	3 Hrs.
4/1/2024	Homeowner	606 15th Street	JS, LR	Pump septic tank	Pumped septic tank	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/2/2024	Maintenance	Aspen Ave.	BD, DS	Fix yard from 8" tap	Fix Yard from Tap	Water	1 Hrs
4/2/2024	Maintenance	91 Grace St	LR, JS, BK	Install new meter setter	Install New Meter Setter	Water	3 Hrs.
4/5/2024	Maintenance	204 Aspen Ave. Jail	DS,BD	Add another coat of roof sealant	Added roof sealant	Admin.	1 Hr.
4/5/2024	Homeowner	304 9th.St.	LR,TB	Pump septic tank	Pumped septic tank	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/5/2024	Maintenance	WWTP	LR,TB	Drain clogged	Cleared clog	Sewer	1 Hr.
4/5/2024	Homeowner	4766 Eastside Hwy.	LR,TB	Pump septic tank	Pumped septic tank	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/8/2023	Homeowner	408 16th.St.	DS,BK	Repair yard from sewer line install	Repaired yard	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/9/2024	Maintenance	1602 Dogwwod Ave.	BD,JS,LR,BK	Water leak 2" main	Repaired water leak	Water	2 Hrs.
4/10/2024	Maintenance	18th.& Dogwwod	DS,TB,LR,JS,BK,BD	Water leak 2" main	Repaired water leak	Water	3 Hrs.
4/11/2024	Homeowner	99 Aspen Ave.	JS,BD	Pump septic tank	Pumped septic tank	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/12/2024	Maintenance	21st. St.	DS,LR	Hydro seed ditches	Seeded ditches	Streets	7 Hrs.
4/15/2024	Maintenance	Water meters	DS,LR,JS,BK,BD,TB	Read water meters	Read water meters	Water	24 Hrs.
4/15/2024	Homeowner	205 13th. St.	TB,BD	Pump septic tank	Pumped septic tank	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/19/2024	Maintenance	601 Riverside	DS,BK,BD	Replace turn sign	Replaced turn sign	Streets	1 Hr.
4/19/2024	Maintenance	603 6th. St.	BK,DS,BD	Repair yard and driveway	Repaired yard and driveway	Water	1 Hr.
4/19/2024	Maintenance	Container site	LR,JS,LK	Pump septic tank	Pumped septic tank	Sewer	2 Hrs.
4/22/2024	Maintenance	208 17th. St.	DS,LR,JS,BD	Water leak 2" main	Repaired water leak	Water	2 Hrs.
4/23/2024	Maintenance	Town Hall	DS,LR,JS,BK,TB,BD	Meter training	Meter training	Water	6 Hrs.
4/24/2024	Maintenance	Town Hall	DS,LR,JS,BK,TB,BD	Meter training	Meter training	Water	6 Hrs.
4/24/2024	Homeowner	808 6th. St.	DS,BK	Sewer smell in alley	Replaced broken clean out cap	Sewer	1 Hr.
4/25/2024	Maintenance	11th. & Dogwwod	DS,LR,TB,BD,BK	Water leak 2" main	Repaired water leak	Water	3 Hrs.
4/25/2024	Maintenance	603 6th. St.	BK,BD	Driveway sinking from previous water repair	Added scoop of gravel	Water	1 Hr.
4/29/2024	Maintenance	Well #2	DS,LR,JS BD	Tap well pipe for chlorine feeder	Tapped and installed chlorine line	Water	2 Hrs.

Parks & Tourism Staff Report April 2024

Staffing:	Authorized	Filled	Vacant
Parks & Tourism Director	1	1	0
Parks & Tourism Assistant Director	1	1	0
Parks Coordinator	1	1	0
Park Ranger II	2	2	0
Park Ranger I	-	9	-
Park Aide	-	0	-

- Park Aide and Park Ranger I positions replace the prior terminology of Tour Guide. Previously, there were 21 authorized tour guide positions. Staff will determine employee numbers once each position type is filled. With this improved staffing structure, we anticipate needing fewer overall employees.

Revenue:

Parks & Tourism generated \$69,633.56 in revenue for the month of April. This is an \$8,063.18 decrease from April 2023. April of 2023 contained a single \$8,043.90 corporate rental of Grand Caverns Park, absent in April 2024, which indicates all other revenue streams were a match between April 2023 and 2024.

1. **Cave & Karst Expo 2024:** We are gearing up for our 2nd annual Cave & Karst Expo for the last day of National Cave Week, Saturday, 6/8th. We had an exceptional debut at this event in 2023 wherein 13 partners provided educational booths and activities for the 400 members of the public who attended. We are hoping to increase the number of partners to 20+ with a commiserate increase in public attendance. I'll report back to the Town Council on how it goes in June.
2. **The Grottoes Bluegrass Festival:** This year's single Bluegrass Festival is taking place on 5/17 – 5/18 at Grand Caverns Park again. Wayne Proffit, our treasured partner, has limited this calendar year's Grottoes Bluegrass Festival to only one spring event, instead of the normal spring & fall schedule, in an effort to concentrate attendance
3. **Broadening & Increasing Revenue Sources:** As you know, Grand Caverns business model has been in a shift over the last 3 years since I became your Parks & Tourism Director, prioritizing quality instead of focusing exclusively on quantity. Thanks to the new staffing model you supported, I would argue that we have become a premier site for excellence in interpretive programming, both informal and formal education. We've completely overhauled the Grand Caverns walking tour, multiplied and refined the Adventure Tours (still the only cave in the state to offer them), introduced History Tours, Geology Tours, GEOL 110 tours (undergraduate), and now we're about to launch a campaign for our newly created grade-specific programming that follow SOLs for K-12th grade. We will be going public with this new initiative in time to drive field trip bookings for both next Fall and Spring seasons.

Additionally, we've introduced new and exciting special events, both free and revenue-generating, in order to support our local community and drive tourism to the Town. Haunted Cave has successfully run for two years generating \$12,000.00 each time. And our Subterranean Sound series netted us \$45,000.00 in revenue with its inaugural launch.

Lastly, we've been applying tremendous polish to the customer's experience, from start to finish.

We've renovated the Giftshop, we're about to complete a renovation of the Adventure Tour Ready Room, we've finished a minor renovation for the Cave Entrance building, and we're about to launch a brand-new website for Grand Caverns at the end of May.

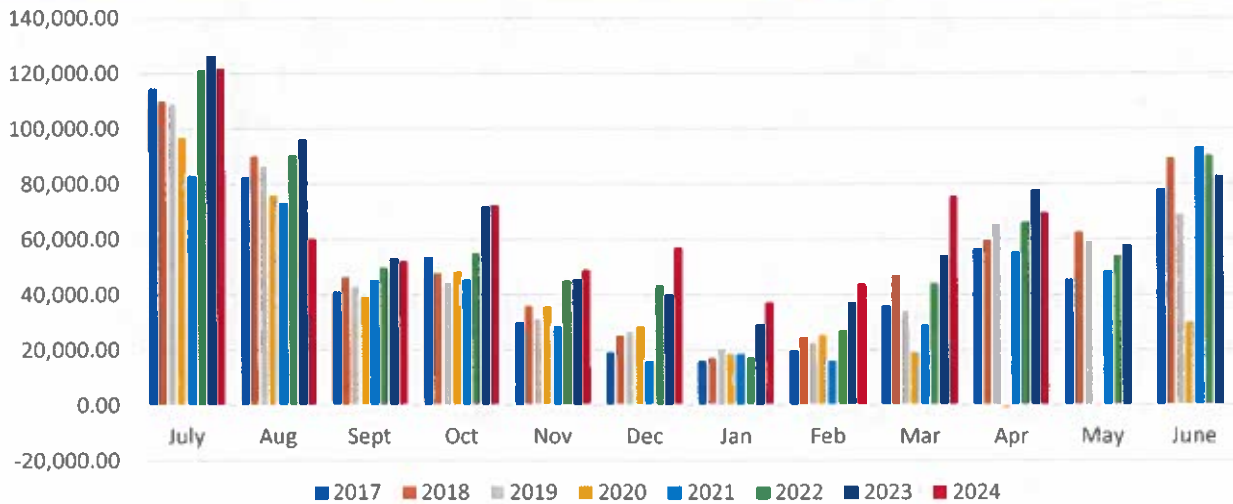
The Grand Caverns of today isn't easily recognized from the Grand Caverns of 2020. I say all of this to preface one fact and alert you to another.

- a. At this time I'm forecasting a revenue shortfall of 6.4% for what was budgeted, or \$56,000.00. *At least* \$35,000 of lost revenue occurred between August and September of 2023 when we closed for 23 days to complete the Phase 2 Communications project inside Grand Caverns. The remaining shortfall, roughly 2.4% of budgeted revenues, seems to be general and not specific to any one revenue stream. That, I would recommend, you should take as an encouragement considering the alternatives. With everything I've prefaced, I'm hoping the citizens of the Town will recognize that the Parks & Tourism Department is poised and equipped to capture more business than it has ever before, and all that's left is to drive it.

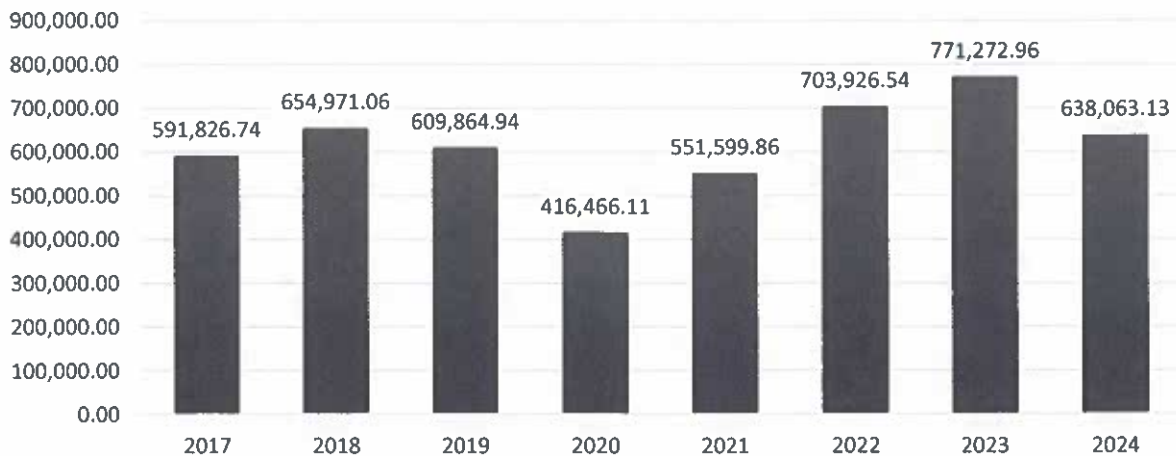
- b. Early in the next fiscal year I'll provide a proposal for the Parks Committee, then hopefully, to all of council that will seek to drive more business to Grand Caverns Park. This proposal will be focused on a branding and advertising strategy which would appeal to broad demographics while better representing the Grand Caverns of today. I deeply appreciate the trust this town's citizens have placed in me, and I remain deeply proud of the team I've amassed and led in our Parks & Tourism Department. Before long though, I'll humbly be asking the citizens to put their trust in me again with this next strategy.

Revenue per Month by Fiscal Year

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
July	114,666.02	109,906.75	109,049.62	96,790.05	83,045.02	121,183.39	126,333.08	121,896.53
August	82,400.00	90,052.60	86,369.02	75,955.14	73,099.04	90,498.86	95,857.62	60,252.18
September	40,864.00	46,500.01	42,753.13	39,037.34	45,294.81	49,867.95	53,129.49	52,043.89
October	53,621.00	47,728.97	44,111.49	48,171.93	45,446.76	55,187.46	71,849.43	72,362.94
November	29,960.14	35,864.01	31,040.05	35,719.21	28,575.92	45,122.38	45,510.93	48,813.49
December	19,065.81	25,078.17	26,501.92	28,439.56	15,788.80	43,131.17	39,826.13	56,869.12
January	15,989.60	16,933.85	20,391.97	18,631.61	18,618.06	17,038.43	29,243.19	37,149.92
February	19,589.22	24,394.21	22,570.37	25,357.98	16,009.96	27,089.55	37,269.68	43,610.16
March	35,916.00	46,890.09	33,851.06	19,130.58	28,944.34	44,157.10	54,117.45	75,431.34
April	56,393.64	59,677.04	65,301.31	-777.78	55,284.51	66,405.33	77,696.74	69,633.56
May	45,428.42	62,606.36	58,972.15	50.60	48,287.55	53,997.59	57,678.58	
June	77,932.89	89,339.00	68,952.85	29,959.89	93,205.09	90,247.33	82,750.64	



Total Revenue



**REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY
OF THE TOWN OF GROTTOS, VIRGINIA**

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes, Virginia adopted a policy permitting the remote participation by a member of the Town Council in accordance with Virginia Code 2.2-3708.3.

WHEREAS, upon mature consideration the Town Council has determined it is in the best interest of the Town to continue to permit such remote attendance in accordance with the Code of Virginia.

NOW THEREFORE, the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes, Virginia hereby adopts the following remote participation policy:

- A. Town council members may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting, the member notifies the Mayor or Town Manager that:
 - 1. The council member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance;
 - 2. A medical condition of a member of the council member's family requires the council member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance; or
 - 3. The council member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may not use remote participation due to personal matters more than two meetings per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.
- B. If participation by a council member through electronic communication means is approved, the Town council shall record in its minutes the remote location from which the member participated; however, the remote location need not be open to the public and may be identified in the minutes by a general description. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 1 or 2, the Town council shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated through electronic communication means due to a (i) temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevented the member's physical attendance or (ii) family member's medical condition that required the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 3, the Town council shall also include in its minutes the specific nature of the personal matter cited by the member.

C. A council member may participate in a meeting by electronic means only when:

1. A quorum of the Council is physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location; and
2. The Council makes arrangements for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2024

Jo Plaster, Mayor

Attest:

Clerk