



## Iron Horse Homeowners Association

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Happy New Year to Everyone in the Iron Horse Community!

I thought now was a good time as any to update all of our property owners on the various projects and events that your HOA is working on.

We are coming off of the Post-Covid Build Bubble. There has been a record number of homes built in the past few years and, as you all know, property prices have soared. Home values have doubled, and prime land prices are up 2-3x. We are finally seeing construction activity moderate and values flatten, but certainly not drop much if at all. There are currently 195 occupied custom homes in addition to our 50 cabins. Another 10 homes are well under construction, and we expect another 6 to break ground this year. 160 of these 261 property owners belong to the Iron Horse Golf Club, and are a substantial majority of our total of 314 property sites, of which we expect only 300+ to actually ever be built. We are nearing the home stretch to build out!

As a premier private club community, property owners expect excellent services and high-quality infrastructure. Your HOA board has been working diligently to address these growth issues and to “grow up” our services from one-person providers to sustainable companies. In addition, we have been planning for our long-term infrastructure needs at full build out.

Let’s start by talking about our roads. Whether it’s the extreme construction traffic of the past few years, or the big freezes and road heaving of last winter, we have several road sections in need of repair. Look no further than the section below the Security Station which has been breaking up this winter. We have a plan to address these problem areas in the spring. Longer term we are looking at what we need to do to keep our roads in the excellent condition we all expect, which may entail asphalt overlay work on Iron Horse Drive in a few years, while some of our side roads will need additional work shortly afterwards.

We are currently re-evaluating our water system and what it requires for full build out. We are developing a plan for a permanent power backup system with fixed generators to maintain power in the event of a major outage. This is to make certain our homes and fire suppression efforts are always online. We are also taking another look at our overall system capacity (did you know that the HOA runs wells as our own water utility just for our community?). While it appears that we have sufficient

water *pumping* capacity, it is not clear that we have sufficient *aquifer supply* capacity. Water and aquifer levels throughout the US and our area have been dropping, and they feed our wells, so we feel it's best to address any issues now. Our water consultant, Morrison-Maierle, is preparing an analysis as we ask the question of what we homeowners can do, as part of the issue is us. The Iron Horse Project was designed to be maintained in a more rural state but has evolved into many homes with large watering systems. Over the years your HOA has been happy to sell unlimited water to all homes, but we are questioning whether we have the long-term supply to do this. We will be taking preliminary steps this spring to address this, from educating everyone about the easy ways to address water waste (fixing leaks and adding smart water control systems), to the simple way to reduce water demand – namely the water price for our heavier users. More to come on this in the spring.

We are very pleased with our new Security Team from Talos Security. They are a step up from our previous contractor, and we hope you have had an improved experience with them. If you haven't already, stop by the Security Station and say hello! They are geared for better quality services with their Jeep which can pull you out of a ditch. By this summer the Jeep will also be equipped with a defibrillator and a commercial grade mobile fire suppression system. The summer golf cart and connection to the Club's wireless radio system provide faster communication. Plus, overall, they are better quality people with better training and a longer-term focus on our community. It has taken us several years to properly improve our Security, but we believe we are finally there. Consider adding Security to your home alarm system numbers to call in the event of an emergency for faster response. 406-863-3032.

We've changed service providers for snow plowing and accounting. It previously took 4-5 hours to plow all of our roads in one pass, but with more resources this can be compressed. We are working with our new provider on plowing priorities, timing, and salting procedures. You may also be aware we changed our 'salt' mixture last year to a higher technology road spray which we believe will improve road safety and reduce spring rock clean up. We have also changed to a new accounting firm for billing, but we have some bugs to work out. Please bear with us as we work through these.

Our internet infrastructure is now top notch. Nearly 1/3 of our homes are now signed up with Mountain Max's digital fiber internet, which provides ultra-high speed 2GB/2GB synchronous service which is usually limited to the big cities. Spectrum is working to repair and upgrade their system too, and this summer you will see some digging along Iron Horse Drive as they improve their service to our community. If you're still using the old CenturyTel phone lines it's certainly time to consider an upgrade.

Let's talk about homeowner's insurance and community emergencies. Fires in neighboring states have caused financial pain for insurers, and it is affecting rates for those in Iron Horse that are more than 5 road miles from the Fire Station in town. Shake roofs and excess brush around your home are other mitigating factors. We plan to have an insurance expert talk at our Town Hall Meeting in June about what *you* can do to reduce your risks and your insurance rates. Lastly, look for the implementation of a community wide emergency text system sometime later this year to keep you alerted of any emergency that affects you.

Let's talk a bit about trash and mailboxes. Republic Services continues its recycling pick-

up on Tuesdays but has moved its trash pick-up day to Friday. ANY week that contains a Monday holiday will push these days back to Wednesday and Saturday. Also, the new bearproof containers are out and guess what? They need you to close and lock the lid to work. Don't assume that bears hibernate all winter as they don't – lock them up please! Regarding mailboxes, you will see another upgrade this summer as we expand our mailbox complex by 50% to accommodate a full build out.

Lastly, let's talk financials. The HOA is taking the approach of spending the necessary resources to grow and maintain our assets to provide value to our property owners. This includes upfront maintenance and purchases, and long-term reserves. We will be raising dues starting July of this year to \$300/month which we believe is pretty good value for a community such as ours. We will revisit this level in another 18-24 months.

Mark your calendars -- the Town Hall meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup> is at 4 pm at Fish Camp, where we will provide grilled appetizers and refreshments while we update homeowners, and you welcome new neighbors. The Annual HOA Meeting is on July 18<sup>th</sup> at the Iron Horse Golf Club clubhouse at 4 pm, which will include the Board Elections.

Let me also thank our Property Manager, Nancy Nicoll. Nancy joined us in the summer of 2021 – right in the middle of the Covid Construction Boom -- so she dealt with a storm of issues right out of the gate.

If this newsletter has not addressed any particular concerns, we want to hear from you! Please feel free to reach out to Nancy with any questions or concerns you may have. [NNicoll@ironhorsemt.com](mailto:NNicoll@ironhorsemt.com), or 406-863-3042.

Andy Moshier, President, Iron Horse Homeowners Association

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