

TO THE RESIDENTS OF THE TOWN OF ORESTES

THE DECISION TO PROCEED WITH A RATE INCREASE FOR A MUNICIPAL UTILITY IS NEVER TAKEN LIGHTLY.

THE FACTS ARE THAT WHEN IT IS NECESSARY TO INCREASE UTILITY RATES THERE ARE LAWS THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED. IT IS A LABORIOUS PROCESS AND ALL ASPECTS OF THE NEEDS OF THE UTILITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE RESIDENTS IS VERY SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED.

FOR THE TOWN OF ORESTES, THIS PROCESS ACTIVELY BEGAN IN AUGUST 2022.

THE COSTS NECESSARY TO OPERATE THE UTILITIES ARE MORE THAN THE AMOUNT OF MONEY TAKEN IN BY OUR CUSTOMERS. RISING COSTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES HAVE IMPACTED US ALL. BUSINESSES AS WELL AS ALL OF US AS CONSUMERS FEEL THE ADDITIONAL BURDEN IT PLACES ON OUR FINANCES.

THE ORESTES WATER UTILITY HAS NOT HAD A RATE INCREASE SINCE 2004. THE ORESTES WASTE WATER UTILITY HAS NOT HAD A RATE INCREASE SINCE 2008. THAT IS 19 AND 15 YEARS RESPECTIVELY.

THERE ARE ADDITIONAL TESTS RECENTLY REQUIRED BY IDEM AND THE TESTING SUPPLIES TO COMPLY WITH THESE MANDATES ARE AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN NOT PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCED. THE WATER SYSTEM WAS UPGRADED IN 1999 AND THE QUALITY OF OUR WATER WAS GREATLY IMPROVED. PRIOR TO 2002 WE DID NOT EVEN HAVE A WASTE WATER SYSTEM. EVERYONE HAD A " SEPTIC" TANK - MOST OF WHICH WERE 55 GALLON BARRELS BURIED IN THE BACKYARD. MANY PEOPLE COULD NOT EVEN FLUSH TOILET PAPER AT THAT TIME. WE NOW HAVE 3 LIFT STATIONS AND OUR WASTE IS PUMPED TO THE ALEXANDRIA WASTE WATER PLANT. THIS IS ALSO QUITE AN UPGRADE FROM THE ANTIQUATED " SEPTIC TANK" EVERYONE HAD. HAD ANY OF US HAD A SEPTIC FAILURE WE WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO INSTALL A NEW SEPTIC SYSTEM INCLUDING " FINGERS" FDR RUNOFF WHICH MOST OF US DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH PROPERTY TO INSTALL.

THE TOWN OF ORESTES HIRED BAKER TILLY, MUNICIPAL ADVISORS FROM INDIANAPOLIS TO DO WHAT IS CALLED A RATE STUDY. THESE PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS/MUNICIPAL ADVISORS REVIEWED THE INCOME AND EXPENSES NECESSARY TO RUN BOTH THE WATER AND WASTE WATER UTILITIES. THE RESULTS OF THEIR INTENSIVE STUDY SHOWED THE TOWN COUNCIL WHAT OUR RATES NEEDED TO BE TO OPERATE OUR UTILITIES. AFTER THE INITIAL REPORT FROM BAKER TILLY THE COUNCIL ASKED THEM TO RETURN TO THE DRAWING TABLE AND FIGURE HOW THE RATES COULD BE PHASED IN OVER A 3 YEAR PERIOD SO AS TO REDUCE THE BURDEN TO THE ORESTES RESIDENT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE YET ALLOW THE UTILITIES TO OPERATE AND BUILD UP A CASH RESERVE TO BE USED FOR NECESSARY OPERATING COSTS AND UNFORSEEN REPAIRS THAT COULD OCCUR. JUST LIKE IN OUR HOME BUDGETS, WE MUST HAVE A RESERVE TO FALL ON FOR REPAIRS THAT ARE NOT EXPECTED AND FOR THOSE PERIODIC COSTS THAT ARE MANDATED.

THE INCREASE FOR AN AVERAGE USER SHOULD AMOUNT TO APPROXIMATELY A \$20.00 PER MONTH INCREASE IN WATER AND A \$6.00 INCREASE IN WASTE WATER FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2023. JANUARY 1, 2024 AN AVERAGE USER SHOULD SEE AN APPRIXIMATE ADDITIONAL \$10.00 PER MONTH INCREASE IN WATER AND A \$6.00 INCREASE IN WASTE WATER. JANUARY 1, 2025 AN AVERAGE USER_ SHOULD SEE AN APPROXIMATE ADDITIONAL \$8.00 INCREASE IN WATER AND A \$6.00 INCREASE IN WASTEWATER. IF YOU ARE AN ABOVE AVERAGE USER YOUR INCREASE WOULD BE MORE AND YOU MAY WANT TO CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN REDUCE YOUR CONSUMPTION. THIS IS SOMETHING ONLY EACH CONSUMER CAN DECIDE ON FOR THEMSELVES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS INCREASE AFFECTS MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AS WELL AS ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. THIS IS NOT A "FOR THEE NOT FOR ME" INCREASE. IT AFFECTS US ALL.

AS I STATED BEFORE, THIS INCREASE WAS NOT TAKEN LIGHTLY. MANY MONTHS OF WORK AND DISCUSSION WERE INVOLVED. AS A TOWN COUNCIL, WE DON'T ALWAYS GET TO DO THE MOST POPULAR THING. WE MUST DO WHAT IS NECESSARY AND WHAT IS BEST FOR THE TOWN AND ITS HOLDINGS AS A WHOLE.

THERE ARE MANY GOOD AND POSITIVE THINGS HAPPENING IN ORESTES, SOME OF THEM ARE AS FOLLOWS:

** THE TOWN OF ORESTES APPLIED FOR AND WAS GRANTED A COM M UNITY CROSSING MATCHING GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$170,170.95 ON APRIL 10, 2023 FOR REPAVING SUPERIOR STREET FROM THE NORTHERN EDGE OF TOWN TO THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF TOWN. THIS UPGRADE WILL OCCUR THIS YEAR. THIS IS PHASE 1 OF A 5 YEAR PLAN TO REPAVE ORESTES BASED ON A ROAD "GRADING" PROCESS.

**WE APPLIED FOR AND WERE GRANTED AN INDIANA CRI MINAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$18,438.86 ON DECEMBER 22, 2022 FOR THE PURPOSE OF UPGRADING THE RADIOS AND COM MUN|CATION EQUIPMENT FOR THE ORESTES POLICE DEPARTMENT WHO WORKS DILIGENTLY TO KEEP ORESTES AND ALL OF US SAFE FROM INCREASING CRI ME RIGHT IN OUR OWN COUNTY.

**WE HAVE APPLIED FOR A \$5,000.00 GRANT FROM THE MADISON COUNTY COM M UNITY FOUNDATION FOR DEFIBRILATORS AND LIFE VAC DEVICES FOR CHOKING VICTIMS FOR OPD WHO ARE OUR FIRST RESPONDERS. BOTH OF THESE ITEMS COULD VERY WELL SAVE THE LIFE OF THE PERSON READING THIS LETTER OR SOMEONE THEY LOVE. I PERSONALLY HOPE THESE ITEMS ARE PURCHASED AND NEVER USED.

**WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF AQUIRING METAL PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT FOR THE OAK STREET MEMORIAL PARK TO REPLACE THE OLD WOODEN EQUIPMENT THAT HAS BECOME A CARPENTER BEE HAVEN. THIS UPGRADE SHOULD TAKE PLACE THIS SUMMER.

** AFTER THE PASSING OF OUR LONG TI ME PESTICIDE APPLICATOR WE HAD NO LICENSED APPLICATOR. WE NOW HAVE A LICENSED PESTICIDE APPLICATOR AND WILL ONCE AGAIN BE ABLE TO TREAT FOR MOSQUITOS.

FACEBOOK IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING A TOOL THAT IS USED TO UPSET PEOPLE AND TO INSTILL ANGER IN OTHER PEOPLE. UNFORTUNATELY, IT SEEMS THAT PEOPLE ENJOY POSTING NEGATIVE THINGS ABOUT THEIR TOWN TO FACEBOOK, RARELY ANYTHING POSITIVE. EVEN THE POSTS REGARDING THE RATE INCREASE WERE MADE BY A PERSON WHO ATTENDED THE ADVERTISED PUBLIC HEARING BUT CHOSE TO ONLY POST THE NEGATIVE EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE MANY POSITIVES DISCUSSED DURING THE SAME MEETING. SOME OF WHICH WERE LISTED ABOVE. SOME POSTS ARE ACTUALLY NOT EVEN FACTUAL.

THE ORESTES TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE 4TH TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH AT THE ORESTES TOWN HALL AS THEY HAVE BEEN FOR DECADES. SOME MONTHS THERE IS NOT ONE SINGLE CITIZEN PRESENT, USUALLY THERE IS ONE. THE PURPOSE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING IS TO DISCUSS AND MAKE DECISIONS FOR THE TOWN OF ORESTES. IT IS NOT A GRIPE SESSION FOR RESIDENTS. IF YOU HAVE AN ISSUE THAT NEEDS ADDRESSING YOU MAY AT ANY TIME THROUGHOUT THE MONTH CONTACT ANY ONE OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS. THEIR CONTACT INFORMATION IS LISTED ON THE OFFICIAL TOWN WEBSITE: TOWNOFESTES.ORG. THEY WILL BE MOST DILIGENT IN ADDRESSING YOUR ISSUE. THERE IS EVEN A PORTION OF THE MEETING ENTITLED " OPEN DISCUSSION ON ITEMS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA". IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ON ANYTHING HAPPENING IN ORESTES THE BEST OPTION FOR YOU TO HAVE FACTUAL INFORMATION IS TO RESPECTFULLY CONTACT ONE OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS OR TO ATTEND A COUNCIL MEETING OR TO CALL THE ORESTES TOWN HALL AT 765-754-7175 FROM 9 TO 12 MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY. WE HAVE AN ANSWERING MACHINE AND YOUR CONCERN WILL MOST DEFINITELY BE ADDRESSED.

WE ARE FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ORESTES AND IT IS A THANKLESS JOB. WE ARE A SMALL COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED TOGETHER FOR MANY YEARS AND WILL MOST LIKELY CONTINUE AS SUCH. LET'S ALL BEHAVE THE WAY WE ARE SUPPOSED TO INSTEAD OF BAD MOUTHING EACH OTHER ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

RESPECTFULLY,

ERINA. ATWOOD
CLERK TREASURER