

Public Statement from Avilla Town Council

The Avilla Town Council would like to inform residents of the current status of the Clerk-Treasurer's office.

Clerk-Treasurer Rita Grocock has not reported to work since June 18, 2025. To date, she has not communicated directly with the Town Council regarding her status or intentions to return. The only correspondence she provided was to Deputy Clerk Lisa Duehmig. On June 23, Ms. Grocock informed the Deputy Clerk that she was on medical leave, and again on July 14 and July 28 stated that she remained on medical leave.

The Town Council recognizes the importance of supporting employees during periods of medical need while also ensuring essential municipal functions are not disrupted. In the absence of direct communication from the Clerk-Treasurer, the Town has acted in good faith to maintain operations and meet statutory obligations.

The extended absence of Ms. Grocock has placed significant strain on the day-to-day operations of the Clerk's Office. Deputy Clerk Lisa Duehmig, who began her service on November 21, 2024, has been maintaining Clerk Treasurer office operations with limited training in several key areas of the Clerk-Treasurer's responsibilities. One of those areas includes budget preparation, a task she was not trained to perform under either the current Clerk Treasurer or the previous Deputy Clerk Treasurer.

To support ongoing town operations and ensure critical deadlines are met, the Town has hired Susan Alyea, an experienced professional with 37 years of local government and accounting experience. Ms. Alyea was recommended by Accelerate Indiana Municipalities and began her work in the office of Clerk-Treasurer Rita Grocock on July 22, 2025. She is assisting the Deputy Clerk with training and operational duties. Her services are being compensated at a rate of \$55 per hour, with mileage reimbursement of \$0.70 per mile.

Of particular concern are the upcoming budget deadlines, which fall under the legal responsibility of the Clerk Treasurer. Currently, it is not known when Ms. Grocock plans to return to fulfill these duties.

Additional operational challenges have arisen during this period. Earlier this year, service from the Town's IT provider was discontinued on March 18 due to non-payment of a past-due bill. That payment was subsequently made by the Clerk Treasurer, although the procedure did not follow standard protocol requiring council approval prior to payment. The council has since ratified that payment, and IT services were restored.

Ms. Grocock did not attend the subsequent Town Council meeting on March 19. Since May 1, 2025, Town Hall has been open for 61 business days. Of those, Ms. Grocock has been absent for 35 days, including every business day since June 19—a consecutive 28 day stretch.

During the June 18 Town Council meeting, Ms. Grocock was asked why the IT provider's bills were once again unpaid with repeated delays. She stated that she had not received the bills. The IT provider then produced evidence that its emails had been blocked at her computer. The Council directed that the IT bills be added to the claims for payment. Ms. Grocock indicated that she would pay the bill the following day. However, she did not report to work the next day and has not returned since.

The Town Council is actively monitoring the situation and continuing to take all appropriate steps to maintain the continuity of services for Avilla residents. Any further developments will be communicated as appropriate.