

City of Watseka

Special Called Meeting

Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Mayor Marcier called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. Present were Alderman Brault, Muench, Dewitt, Garfield, Miller, Pence, and Alderwoman Rohlfs along with Public Works Director Loren.

Public Comment-None

Motion to hire Jason Smith for the position of Deputy Director of Public Works \$57.69/hour

Lots of discussion was had, Alderman Brault asked what certifications he had, Loren shared he has his Class A CDL, and he will have to obtain immediately his water/wastewater certifications. Loren shared the job description that he came up with, Jason will oversee the department, he will train, evaluate, develop and he will get his certifications. Loren shared that if something were to happen to him the city would have someone that could run the department. Alderwoman Rohlfs asked Loren if he had a copy of profile, Loren shared he did not, but he knows his background he owns his own underground excavating company he has had stents with other union companies; he owns excavator equipment, he does what we do but on his own. Jason has installed sewer lines installs, he has an extensive background in construction, he lives on the edge of Watseka. Mayor Marcier shared that the 2-page job description was extensive. Loren share that this position came about when they lost their foreman, we need more than a foreman this will allow me to step away from the department, Loren shared that he has only had 1 week of vacation since he was hired, when he came back the foreman quit. The staff now understand that we have a large void to fill, we need a larger individual that can mirror Loren. Loren is responsible for a lot of things before Loren was hired a bunch of work was outsourced, he is trying to bring things inhouse. The city needs to value itself by bringing the work in house to offset their wages. Loren then shared prevailing wage for Iroquois County and an invoice from IPC. Loren shared that Jason is giving up opportunities/business to come and work for Watseka. Alderman Muench asked if Jason plans to keep his business, Loren shared that guys are always tinkering but he will be on call and Loren knows they cannot be off at the same time, vacation at the same time, etc. Alderman Pence then asked so Jason is aware that this will be his primary job, Loren said yes, this will allow him more time to look for grants and see what they can do. Mayor Marcier shared that investments have been made in the equipment the city has purchased. Loren shared before his time nothing was done in Watseka, it's not because of me, the staff are learning, and the council has been supportive. Alderman Pence came into this with an open mind, I have only been on this side for a short time, and he sees Loren's enthusiasm, and dedication for our community, he does not want to see the city have to start all over again if something were to happen to Loren. Loren shared again that the city needs to protect itself, different layers of management, I have a family too that I need to see, we can conquer and divide to get things done. Alderman Dewitt shared he was on the fence coming into this, but Loren sold him on this he is ready to make the motion. Loren shared that Jason will be a salary employee, Alderman Garfield asked if both unions were contacted, Loren said yes, the city attorney looked it over with the job description and duties outside of the union is no issue. Alderman Garfield also asked with Jason being a new employee he will earn his sick time, vacations, etc. Loren stated that Jason and he discussed 2 weeks' vacation up front, he will not get comp time, overtime. Alderman

Brault asked how Loren came up with the \$57.69/hour Loren share that him and Jason looked at what unions make as a laborer or an operator they make much more Loren and Jason settled on \$120,000 salary. Alderman Brault mentioned then his insurance will be paid for by the city. Loren said he is a city employee he will get all city benefits Jason can do the blueprints for a job without anyone holding his hand. Alderman Brault then asked since Jason has no water/wastewater certifications is he going to come back and ask for a raise. Loren said he did not think so. Alderman Rohlfs asked what if he does not get the certifications, Loren said he won't try he will Loren said that Jason will show his worth. Loren shared he knows this is a lot but the city will save money by having projects done in house

A Motion was made by Dewitt, seconded by Rohlfs to hire Jason Smith for the position of Deputy Director of Public Works \$57.69/hour. Motion passed 5-2 with Alderman Brault and Garfield voting no.

A Motion was made by Garfield, seconded by Rohlfs to adjourn at 5:55pm. Motion passed 7-0.

Amanda Hibbs, City Clerk