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City administrator Brock Waters accepts city manager position in Manchester

BY SHAELY ODEAN

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Osage City Administrator Brock Waters has accepted a position as the City of Manchester's next city manager. According to a press release on the City of Manchester's Facebook page, Waters will take over the position of longtime City Manager Tim Vick on May 4.

Vick recently accepted a position in Adel, Iowa, as their city manager prompting Manchester to search for his replacement.

Waters has served as Osage's city administrator and public works director since September 2022.

Manchester initiated a "thorough search that attracted strong candidates from several states." The search, which included multiple rounds of interviews, produced three finalists.

"Brock stood out for his leadership experience, his understanding of municipal operations, and his commitment to community engagement," Mayor Behnken said. "We were fortunate to have three exceptional finalists. Ultimately, Brock's background and vision for local government distinguished him for the final selection. We're excited to welcome him to Manchester and look forward to the leadership he will bring to our community."

Waters has taken on various projects and roles during his time in Osage. He serves as airport manager and zoning administrator and works in close collaboration with city council members regarding policy execution.

Before serving as the city administrator in Osage, Waters served as deputy city clerk in Postville, Iowa, where he was instrumental in securing \$50,000 in grant funding directed toward city projects.

This is a developing story. Check back for a follow-up interview regarding his transition and what comes next for the City of Osage.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MANCHESTER'S FACEBOOK PAGE

The City of Manchester's logo is shown. City Administrator Brock Waters will take over the position of longtime City Manager Tim Vick on May 4.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OMU'S WEBSITE

The Osage Municipal Utilities (OMU) logo is shown. A natural gas pipeline explosion in Minnesota that partially supplies Osage is expected to cause an increase in gas bills.

Pipeline explosion expected to impact Osage utility bills

BY SHAELY ODEAN

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A mid-January pipeline explosion in Minnesota is expected to ripple through local utility bills, though Stacy Walsh, general manager of Osage Municipal Utilities (OMU) says strategic planning and board intervention will help cushion the financial blow.

On Jan. 16, a Northern Natural Gas (NNG) pipeline experienced an explosion near Willow River, Minnesota. While the incident resulted in significant infrastructure damage and injuries were reported, NNG successfully constructed a temporary bypass pipeline to restore service by Jan. 30, but a definitive date for the mainline's return to full service remains unconfirmed.

Walsh assured residents that the incident never threatened the physical delivery of heat to homes.

"Our system receives gas from other delivery points, so this loss did not pose a risk of not having any service," Walsh said.

The primary impact, however, is being felt in the market. Following the explosion, NNG declared a force majeure event, a legal status for unforeseeable circumstances that prevent a party from fulfilling a contract. These disruptions reduced OMU's contracted deliveries, forcing the utility to secure supplemental gas on the daily market at significantly higher prices.

To prevent a massive one-time spike for residents, the OMU board of trustees voted to spread the incremental costs across both February and March billing cycles.

"Each month we calculate a Purchase Gas Adjustment (PGA), a line item on customer bills that reflects changes in the cost of natural gas," Walsh said. "This month the PGA would have been unusually high, so our board of trustees chose to split the cost between the February and March bills to lessen the impact."

Walsh noted that because January was unseasonably cold, usage was already higher than average, making the decision to spread the costs "an important step to help reduce financial stress on our customers."

Data tracked by OMU highlights the severity of the market shift. Total natural gas costs for

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Osage, Riceville begin process to hire new shared superintendent

ALYCIA DIONEDA SCHNEEDLE

The Osage Oracle

School officials in Osage and Riceville have begun the process of hiring a new shared superintendent following the resignation of longtime district leader Barb Schwamman.

Schwamman announced Feb. 24 that she will step down at the end of the school year after accepting a leadership position with Keystone Area Education Agency.

The superintendent posi-

tion was listed on March 6 on the SchoolSpring education job board as the districts launched a joint search process to identify her successor. According to the listing, applications will be accepted through March 21, with the position scheduled to begin July 1.

Riceville School Board President Kyle Guertin said the districts have hired a search firm to assist with recruiting and evaluating candidates.

"A search firm has been hired to assist us in the process," Guer-

tin said in an email. "We are excited to work with them in finding a candidate that will continue the great work in both districts."

Guertin said the hiring process will involve several groups from the school communities.

"During the interview process, we will have a panel of board members, administration, faculty members, and community members," he said.

Both districts intend to continue sharing a superintendent, an arrangement officials say has worked well for the two school

systems.

"We have met with representatives from the Osage School Board and we are in agreement to continue sharing a superintendent," Guertin said. "It has worked great for us in the past, with Barb, and we are looking forward to continuing the benefits of sharing the position."

Schwamman said the shared leadership model developed over time as the two districts explored

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Stan's Drive-In preparing to reopen for the season with soft opening events

As winter winds down, Stan's Drive-In is preparing to reopen for the season, with staff busy cleaning and getting the popular local eatery ready for customers.

The business recently announced plans for several soft-opening events next week as employees prepare for the full season ahead.

On Friday, March 13, Stan's Drive-In plans to serve fish sandwiches, fish dinners and pork tenderloin sandwiches with fries from 4 to 7 p.m.

The following week, the restaurant will begin serving ice cream again. The ice cream machine is scheduled to be turned on Monday, March 16, with service available from 3 to 7 p.m.

Owners say the soft opening will allow staff to move through operations more efficiently and provide time to train employees before the restaurant returns to its regular schedule.

Following the soft opening events, Stan's Drive-In plans to be fully open for the season.



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