

Osage Administrator Brock Waters reflects on tenure, looks towards Manchester transition

BY SHAELY ODEAN

shaely@nelsonmediacompany.com

Following the announcement of his move to Manchester, Osage City Administrator and Public Works Director Brock Waters is working to ensure a smooth hand-off for the community he has served since September 2022. Waters is scheduled to begin his new role as Manchester city manager on May 4, with his final day in Osage set for April 24.

The transition comes after a competitive search process in Manchester to replace longtime manager Tim Vick. For Waters, the decision to depart was influenced by the opportunity for professional growth and a desire to move closer to family.

"It wasn't any one thing in particular. I think the opportunity is a great one, and I'm excited for the role in Manchester, but I have really enjoyed my time here, and it's just kind of the timing was right," Waters said. "It's closer to family as well. I think that one of the bigger driving factors was seeing family all the time. It'll be nice to be a little closer."

During his time in Osage, Waters became the first person to hold the formal "City Administrator" title, a role that was consolidated with public works and zoning.



PHOTO FROM OSAGE, IOWA FACEBOOK PAGE
Osage City Administrator Brock Waters poses for a photo. Waters is preparing to conclude his tenure in Osage on April 24 before transitioning to his new role as the city manager of Manchester.

While he oversaw physical changes like the new splash pad and playground, Waters identified the upcoming water treatment facility as the project with the most significant long-term impact. Currently in the planning stages for a tentative late 2027 or early 2028 start, Waters said the facility will "set us up for success for the coming, you know, next 30 years."

The Osage City Council is currently discussing whether to keep the positions of administrator and

public works director consolidated or to split them moving forward. Waters noted that wearing many hats forced him to learn the city's intricacies quickly, but he emphasized that the most important goal now is maintaining continuity.

"How do we minimize that loss of continuity and keep things rolling in a positive direction is probably the most important piece," Waters said. "I've offered different alternatives of what could or might work... I told the council that I'd

like to be of assistance where I can in the time I have left."

Beyond infrastructure, Waters highlighted the creation of a comprehensive employee handbook as a major internal milestone. The handbook provided enough clarity and protection for city staff that the public works union chose not to renew its contract this year. Waters described the internal morale as high and characterized the city's financial health as "solid."

Waters has also been a staple of Osage's civic life, serving as vice president of the Cedar River Complex Board and participating in the Osage Lions Club and Mitchell County Economic Development Board. He plans to bring that same level of civic engagement to Manchester.

As he buttons up projects like the Maple Trail extension and city code codification, Waters expressed his gratitude for the community's welcoming spirit.

"Osage is a really great community... the mindset of trying to help each other and just everybody kind of gets their hands dirty and they're willing to do the work," Waters said. "It's been an honor and a pleasure to work here, and I will certainly miss Osage as a whole. Hopefully we'll be able to get back here once in a while to visit."



PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT HEITPAS

The Osage Water tower stands above the city. During Monday's meeting, the Osage City Council approved a \$9,500 infrastructure project to optimize operations and maximize storage capacity at the municipal treatment plant.

Osage Council addresses budget, resignation and infrastructure upgrades

BY SHAELY ODEAN

shaely@nelsonmediacompany.com

The Osage City Council moved toward finalizing the city's financial future and navigating a leadership transition during a dual-session meeting Monday night. Following a public hearing regarding the proposed property tax levy for fiscal year 2026-27, the council formally addressed the resignation of City Administrator Brock Waters and approved a \$9,500 optimization for the municipal water facility.

The evening began with a 5:30 p.m. public hearing where the proposed tax levy was explained for attendees. The rate is set to shift from 14.22 to 14.29 per \$1,000 of taxable value, representing a revenue increase of less than 1 percent. Waters noted that the city's budget growth of 0.8 percent sits significantly below the Consumer Price Index of 2.8 percent as a result of "conservative efforts" by department heads to reduce requests.

Public comment during the hearing focused on the burden of property taxes on Main Street businesses. A local business owner expressed concern that high taxes make it difficult for entrepreneurs to stay in town, asking if the city has programs to help cover expenses. Waters highlighted existing options such as Main Street loan programs and tax abatement for building improvements.

The discussion also touched on the city's policy of covering 100% of employee healthcare premiums. A council member explained that this benefit is a critical tool for retention, particularly for law enforcement.

"One of the reasons why the council has been reluctant to do anything with the healthcare is that's one of the benefits that sets us apart from the county," Mayor Steve Cooper said. "We do lose police officers to the sheriff's department... it is one way that we can offset part of that to try to keep our employees."

Following the hearing,

the council moved into its regular 5:45 p.m. session where they officially accepted Waters' resignation. Waters, who has served the city since September 2022 is departing to become the City Manager in Manchester. He expressed a desire to remain available to the city for phone calls and assistance even after his April 24 departure to ensure continuity on several major projects.

The council also approved a \$9,500 proposal from Engineered Equipment Solutions for a series of site visits and "sludge modeling" at the city's 10-year-old treatment plant. Waters explained that the goal is to optimize operations and increase the percentage of solids in the waste, which would maximize storage capacity and potentially reduce the frequency of waste application in the spring.

"We're trying to optimize our operation a little more so we can minimize any violations... and maximize our storage at the end of it all," Waters said. "In the long run, [it] would help save us a few bucks on that side of the equation."

Infrastructure and procedural clarity remained themes as the council reviewed a new 20-page draft of City Council Rules of Procedure. The document aims to codify decorum and standard operating procedures for meetings and committee reports. While the council tabled formal action until April 6 to allow for further review, members agreed that having a written manual would assist with "city continuity" as new leadership eventually steps in.

"It sets forth the rules of a meeting," Waters said. "It just kind of sets up this additional policy folder where you can put some of these things that aren't necessarily spelled out in the city code, but this is what the policy of the city is."

The council set April 6 as the date for the next public hearing to formally adopt the full fiscal year 2026-27 budget.

Osage woman recounts frightening encounter near CRC, urges vigilance

BY CHRIS C. NELSON

Publisher, The Osage Oracle

What began as a routine late-night workout turned into a frightening experience for an Osage woman who says she was followed through town before seeking safety at the police station.

Nicole Hemann said the encounter occurred Friday night, March 20, between approximately 10:30 and 11:15 p.m. after she left the Cedar River Complex.

After finishing her workout, Hemann stepped outside and noticed a man near her vehicle.

"I noticed a man with a black trench coat on circling my car," she said.

As she approached, the situation quickly escalated. The man began walking toward her, speaking loudly.

"I dodged him in a way and he started saying, 'I'm not [expletive] following you,'" Hemann said.

Moments later, after she locked her car, she said he added, "I knew that was your [expletive] car."

At that point, Hemann said she made a split-second decision — one she believes kept her safe.

"I couldn't go into my



car ... I was afraid of him shoving me in," she said. "I couldn't go back into the building either. So my safest option was to get to the police station."

Hemann turned away from her vehicle and began moving quickly along Seventh Street, staying in well-lit areas as she headed toward the Osage Police Department.

She said the man followed her.

At times, she lost sight of him as he cut through the trees in City Park.

"He was cutting through the trees so I couldn't see him in the dark," she said.

Hemann said the man followed her as far as the

OMU parking lot.

Although there was no physical contact, she described the situation as the first time in her life she has felt truly unsafe in her hometown.

"I grew up here. I was never scared. The first time I was scared was that night," she said.

Hemann reached the police station and was let inside, where officers responded and assisted her.

"They were so kind and generous and listened to me," she said.

An officer later drove her back to the CRC and remained there until she was safely inside her vehicle and on her way.

Struggling with a Sports Betting Problem?

If your gambling has gone from fun to out of control, 1-800 BETS OFF can help.

There is no judgement. Just help.

1-800-BETS OFF

Your Life Iowa | Iowa HHS

WOLTHOFF from page 1

or Society, she has balanced academic excellence with the physical and emotional demands of her health challenges — all while becoming a leader and source of encouragement for others.

Riceville speech coach Tammi Mueller has witnessed that transformation firsthand.

"From a shy little girl who couldn't read to a national winner, she has overcome so much," Mueller said. "Her high school journey hasn't been typi-

cal, but she has persevered through everything. When I nominated her, I knew she deserved it."

For her family, the honor represents more than recognition — it is a moment that reflects years of perseverance.

"She's had to overcome a lot of hardships," said her father, Craig Wolthoff. "There are so many things she hasn't been able to do that she wished she could. So for her to receive this award — it means everything to her, and it means everything to us."

Back in the gym, as the applause continued and classmates surrounded her, Wolthoff was still trying to process it all — a rare moment for someone known for finding the right words.

"It's crazy. I'm still comprehending it," she said. "I'm speechless, to say the least."

For a student whose life has been built around finding her voice, that silence said everything.



Local ADVERTISING That Works as Hard as You Do

Contact Chris today about the best locally focused print and digital advertising solutions to fit your needs!

CHRIS NELSON
Publisher - The Osage Oracle
cnelson@nelsonmediacompany.com