

Houstonville approves rate hike for new police chief

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HUSTONVILLE – There's a new police chief in town for Houstonville.

Or at least there will be in a few days. And along with the new chief comes a new new-hire rate.

The Houstonville City Council recently hired Allen Weston as the new police chief and, in a special-called meeting Thursday, the council approved raising the current starting rate for the police chief from \$12 an hour to \$14 an hour.

Weston, who replaced Fred McCoy who was dismissed, will be released from his current job with the Garrard County Police Department on Aug. 31. He was with the City of Lancaster and Garrard police forces for the past 19 years. Prior to that he was a deputy sheriff in Wayne County.

"He definitely has a very nice past as far as his law enforcement career," Houstonville Mayor Marc Spivey said. "I did do some checking around, checking his references and his past employees speak very highly of him. I've had a lot of people say he'll be a very good fit for the city of Houstonville."

"On Sept 1. we're going to sit down and start talking some more. He has some very good ideas. We're going to come up with new personnel policies. I don't micromanage. I have input on what I expect from him for the city and that's what we're going to talk about. I think it's going to be a good thing for us."

Weston will work 40 hours a week, but he won't have a set schedule.

"If he wants to come out at 11 p.m. on a Saturday night and work until 3 a.m. on a Sunday morning ... I want him out all different hours," said Spivey. "He agrees with me that criminals do not have a set schedule and he's not going to be on a set schedule. He'll be patrolling different hours."

The unanimous vote to approve the raise in pay rate did not come without a little discussion.

"Is he taking a pay cut to come here?" asked Councilman Jimmy Evans. "And why?"

Spivey explained about the discontinuation of the Garrard County Police Department saying, "I understand that it might be unstable is what he's thinking, and he's kind of looking to being a police chief." He added that Weston had talked it over with his family before accepting the job.

The police chief position comes with a 50-cent an hour pay raise after 90 days and an additional 50-cent increase after the first year. On the five-year pay scale, Weston would receive a 75-cent raise after year two, a \$1 raise an hour after years three and four and a 50-cent raise after the fifth year.

Spivey said Weston, who will get insurance and a stipend account, will make around \$32,000 a year, which prompted Evans to ask, "Are we going to be able to afford him?"

Spivey said the city could afford the raise in the police chief's rate.

"I'm just always concerned when our money drops below \$30-\$35,000," Evans said.

The council inquired what McCoy drew as police chief. City Clerk Rita Clem stated he made almost \$17 an hour, plus \$300 a month and a stipend.

"So we're getting a \$3 an hour savings," said Councilman Timothy P. Smith.

Evans quickly said, "I'd like to make a motion that we raise the starting rate to \$14 an hour."

Jimmy Lane seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The request for a rate hike was the first of two items on the agenda for the special-called meeting. The second item centered around the fire chief's car.

"Do you feel that vehicle's safe?" Spivey asked Lane, a council member and Hustonville's Fire Chief.

"It needs a little work on it," Lane answered, saying he didn't want members driving it to Hazard this weekend because of bad tires. "It needs a windshield in it, it needs tires put on it, oil leak ... the fire department's spent almost \$4,000 on that car."

"I hate to just give it up. I hate to take anything away from the fire department. We're struggling the way it is. I hate to lose it after putting so much money in it. And have to put more money in it still."

Spivey said he wanted to bring the issue up at the meeting because the council had previously discussed making the vehicle a dual-service vehicle, or public safety vehicle for the school safety officer and the fire chief.

"Our new police chief will be driving the city-owned police cruiser and Mr. Alan Sims (school safety officer) has been driving that some, so for us to keep Mr. Sims as a safety officer we're going to have to have a vehicle for him," he said.

Lane suggested that the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office could be of help in the issue.

"I talked to Curt Folger and he said he's going to have a couple cars," Lane said.

"He told me the same thing," said Spivey. "Of course, Hustonville has been very generous with them in the past as far as securing their drug enforcement dogs and things (city donated \$1,000 toward the Sheriff's two K-9 officers)." He said he would take it under consideration. "We're just waiting to find out."

Clem reported that people had been coming in and saying how much help Sims had been as a school traffic officer.

"I understand we need to give him a car. I just don't want to see the fire department handicapped," Lane said. "If we lose that daggone car, you might has well take one of our trucks, too. You all do what you want to do."

In addition to seeking help from the Sheriff's Office, the council talked of checking into state auctions as an avenue for acquiring a car.

The council decided to table the issue until September.