



CITY OF WEST FRANKFORT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of West Frankfort – Office of the Mayor
West Frankfort, Illinois

West Frankfort City Council Maintains Current Terms for Fire Chief Position

At the March 10 meeting of the West Frankfort City Council, the council voted unanimously to maintain the current terms of employment for the position of Fire Chief. This decision effectively declined a request for a salary increase.

The council carefully considered the request and the city's overall financial position. While it was noted that the Fire Chief has not received a raise in two years, it is important to clarify that no department heads or other non-union employees of the city have received raises during that same period. This has been a necessary measure as the city works through ongoing financial challenges.

Recent discussion has also referenced a "\$20,000 raise" for Codes Officer Thad Snell. That characterization is inaccurate.

The City of West Frankfort has long had a Codes Department, and Mr. Snell has served as the city's Codes Officer. At the recent meeting, the council formally recognized Mr. Snell as the head of the Codes Department. Because he is currently the only member of that department, the title adjustment had not previously been formalized. As department head, his salary was adjusted to align with the standard compensation for all department heads within the city.

The actual salary adjustment associated with that change was \$12,119.30, not \$20,000. Additionally, Mr. Snell agreed to take on the responsibilities of ADA Coordinator without the \$3,600 annual stipend that had been approved by the council for that position. When factoring in those additional responsibilities, the effective increase associated with his promotion is approximately \$8,519.30.

Recognizing Mr. Snell as department head also places the city in a stronger administrative position should the city expand the Codes Department in the future and hire additional codes officers when financial conditions allow.

The ADA Coordinator stipend was originally approved by the council to support the position previously held by the Fire Chief. When the stipend amount was established at \$3,600 per year, the Fire Chief chose to step down from that role. Mr. Snell subsequently agreed to assume the ADA Coordinator responsibilities without the stipend.

Questions have also been raised regarding compensation within the Police Department. The current Deputy Police Chief, Clint Willis, earns a salary that exceeds that of the Fire Chief. This situation exists because the Deputy Chief is a union employee whose compensation is determined through collective bargaining agreements, rather than through city salary determinations for department heads. In addition, the Deputy Chief is currently serving as Acting Police Chief, as the city does not presently have a Police Chief.

The council recognizes that this situation will need to be addressed in the future. However, the city's current financial circumstances make immediate restructuring difficult.

Over the past two years, the city has worked diligently to stabilize its finances following significant financial management issues that occurred under the previous city treasurer. A new treasurer was appointed in December 2024, and since that time the city has been actively working to correct records and restore financial stability.

Because of these challenges, the council has taken a conservative approach to spending and compensation adjustments. The city has limited tax and rate changes to what was necessary to cover required costs and obligations, including:

- Adjustments to water rates to pass along increased system costs.
- Implementation of a 1% local grocery tax to replace revenue that was previously provided to municipalities by the State of Illinois before being eliminated.
- Approval of a property tax levy increase affecting only the city's portion of the tax bill, primarily to meet state-mandated pension funding obligations. While the levy increased 19.95% within the city's jurisdiction, the impact on overall property tax bills is effectively less than 10% because the city represents only one portion of the total tax bill.

The council remains committed to responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds while continuing to provide essential services to the residents of West Frankfort.

“We value the service of all of our employees and department leaders,” said Mayor Tim Arview. “At the same time, the council has a responsibility to ensure the city lives within its means. Our decisions are guided by fairness across departments and by the financial realities we are working through as a city.”