

Five Seeking Hiawatha Commission Seat, Gernon Bids Farwell

(KNZA)--Five individuals are seeking to fill an upcoming vacancy on the Hiawatha City Commission.

The Commission Monday evening heard from the five residents interested in replacing Steffen Shamburg as Commissioner of Police. They include former commissioner John Sheeran, Dennis Greer, Mark Dunavan, Richard Schilling and Mary Waite. Each told about themselves and answered questions from the Commission.

Shamburg is to be sworn in as mayor May 4th, and the Commission will appointment someone to fill his Commission seat at that time.

Monday was the last meeting for current Mayor Crosby Gernon whose held the position since May 2006.

In his farwell comments, Gernon said it's been a honor and privilege to serve as mayor. He noted the city's property tax levy is lower now than when he took office and the city has two less employees now than in 2006. Since taking office, he also noted the long list of infrastructure improvements that have been made and said steps taken to bring the city into compliance with mandated improvements to its sewer and water systems. In addition, he said local industry has added jobs and a new hotel has been built. In the last 6 or 7 years, he said the city has seen \$18 million in new commercial construction, and last year, 14 new small businesses opened. However, Gernon said there's a cautionary note that the city should heed. He said "small towns face strong headwinds and while Hiawatha has held its own for a time, ongoing census and demographic trends should concern us all." Gernon said "the real challenge before us is whether we are willing to thrive not simply survive."

A reception for Gernon will be held prior to the May 4th meeting from 4:30 to 5:30 at the Hiawatha City Hall, and the public is invited to attend.

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