

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Imperial Police Chief Rob Browning resigned abruptly Friday after serving a year and a half in the position.

The resignation was effective that day, said City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland.

The appointment of an interim police chief was on Monday night's city council agenda, but in the absence of Mayor Dwight Coleman, no appointment could be offered to the council for a vote.

Coleman, who was contacted Tuesday, said other commitments kept him from Monday's meeting, but he expected to make an interim chief appointment at the council's next meeting Nov. 4.

"I hate to see him resign," Coleman said of Browning.

He said Browning's letter of resignation was addressed to him, but since it involves personnel he could not divulge its contents.

A request for a copy of Browning's letter of resignation was denied by Leyland, on advice from City Attorney Josh Wendell.

The Imperial Republican has made an official public records request for a copy of the resignation letter.

According to information included with the Oct. 21 council meeting agenda, Imperial Police Sgt. Ryan Wisnieski's name was likely to be offered for the interim chief position.

A wage ordinance was also on Monday's agenda, setting the interim chief's wage, and Wisnieski's name was listed there as the interim chief with a blank left for the salary, awaiting council action.

City Attorney Wendell said Monday that no action could be taken without an appointment from the mayor, who oversees the police department and appoints the chief.

Requests for comments from Browning on reasons for the resignation did not produce an interview.

Browning did say he was interviewing for jobs on Tuesday in the area.

Browning has been a member of the Imperial Police Department for 16 years, joining in October 1997. He replaced his father, Larry, as police chief on April 1, 2012.

Mayor Coleman said Sgt. Wisnieski, as the department's most senior officer, was placed in charge, as he has been in the past when the police chief was out of town.

Local business owner Brad Moline was at the meeting Monday, and encouraged the mayor and three council members present—Chad Yaw, John Arterburn and Dan Thompson—not to accept Browning's resignation.

"I don't know the severity of the issue, but I encourage you not to accept it," Moline said.