

**By Russ Pankonin**

**The Imperial Republican**

Local citizens continue to seek more understanding about the reasons behind the recent resignation of Police Chief Rob Browning.

During Monday's council meeting, the council did not elaborate on the circumstances on the basis that it deals with personnel.

Discussion of personnel issues qualifies as one of the exceptions in Nebraska's open meetings law. Closed sessions can be conducted to protect the reputation of individuals involved.

Several council members have alluded they would like the public to know more about their concerns but are barred from doing so because they involve personnel issues.

The law also gives the individual the right to discuss the situation during an open meeting.

While Browning has not asked for such a discussion by the council, he said this week he became aware of some of the issues council members will not discuss.

Browning said he is now aware of four specific issues but indicated there could be more he was not made aware of.

The first surrounds the acceptance of a personal cash gift from Chad and Amber Yaw for his efforts during the Hanes kidnapping incident.

Yaw is also a member of the council, raising the question of impropriety by both parties.

Browning said another issue stems from his role as piano accompanist for the school's music program.

Browning said he receives a monthly stipend from the school for his efforts. Browning said there could be concern these duties are being done on the city's time and that he's being paid for it.

Browning is not an hourly employee of the city. Like the other officers, his position is salaried.

Browning said another issue surrounds his action in dealing with a local traffic citation.

He said one of his officers issued a citation to a driver for careless driving.

The involved party brought the issue to Browning for his review.

Browning said Tuesday he didn't believe the situation merited the severity of a careless driving citation and ripped up the ticket.

Since that time, Browning said he's learned he does not have the authority as chief to take such action.

Another issue, he said, relates to his personal use of a police vehicle.

Browning said his mother recently suffered a stroke in the early morning hours. His parents live in the country about 20 miles north of Wauneta.

In order to stay in radio contact with the ambulance summoned from Wallace, Browning said he took his police vehicle.

On his return to Imperial, he said he notified Mayor Dwight Coleman of his actions.

Coleman told Browning he did not have a problem with him using the police vehicle under those circumstances.

However, Coleman said he's learned he does not have the authority as mayor to authorize the use of city vehicles.

In addition, Browning could be subject to reprimand for violating city personnel policy.

### **Possible investigation**

Coleman would not comment on whether these issues are related to Browning's resignation.

He did say it may be best to request an investigation by the state patrol to determine whether any wrong doing occurred by either party when Yaw made the gift or Browning accepted it. He said Wednesday morning that he has not yet made a formal request for the investigation.