



City Of Towanda, KS

Lovin' the Small Town Life!

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Jennifer Shaults, **Mayor**

Council Members:

Chris Hunt, Mike Hayes,

Jennifer Watkins, Kit Williams, Tom Pyle

Office Of

Andy Newbrey

City Administrator/City Clerk

September 13, 2025

Hello Fellow Taxpayers,

As the Mayor of Towanda, I want to address the city's ongoing challenges in maintaining and upgrading aging water infrastructure. I am emphasizing the need for financial solutions to prevent further water loss and increased individual tax burdens. I am advocating for a sales tax increase as a necessary measure to fund critical repairs and improvements to our water system.

Over the past decade or more, the biggest challenges I have encountered as Mayor and former Councilwoman have been balancing growth and taxes. I can attest and meeting records prove the city has aimed to improve amenities and infrastructure while keeping your tax burden low.

Efforts have included, but are not limited to, Main Street improvements, city park expansion, keeping the pool open, updates to our community facilities, and supporting our small businesses in a small town. We are proud of our city buildings, specifically the Wilbur Weins Community Building, the Towanda Area Historical Museum and the Public Library at Norman Park. Our code enforcement efforts are proving positive, but as always, more work needs to be done on all fronts.

Believe me when I say, "We" have wanted big things for our city too, all while still needing to manage the basic goals of a small-town municipality. Those goals include keeping our water safe to drink, ensuring our waste systems are operable and compliant, deploying a professional public safety system to protect us, and maintaining a healthy living environment for all citizens.

Our aging infrastructure challenges are too many for a yearly budget to support. You may be asking why now? Why not do this before a big leak occurs? I compare it to replacing your car engine just because it has high miles. It is still running and getting me from A to B. Since water losses were minimal for years, we did not replace them. We fixed the leaks as they surfaced.

Plus, replacing water lines comes with significant costs, and without an increase in taxes, the council determined it was not practical to address an issue that had not occurred.

Now that we are suffering financial losses that cannot be sustained, we are forced to decide. Our council feels this is the best option forward. Without passing additional sales taxes, property taxes would have to increase more sharply thus costing you more individually.

I hope everyone understands that our efforts to manage water losses have been great so far, but obviously not enough. The city has utilized state, county, and district resources to identify and verify water losses. We have collaborated with engineers and maintenance crews to address the leaks, but these fixes have often shifted pressure, causing new and sometimes larger issues. If you want to see an example of the deteriorated, rusted-out water pipes we want to replace, please come to City Hall.

At no point do council members want to impose a potential \$10 million project on taxpayers, but we have exhausted our options. A sales tax increase would distribute costs based on consumption, rather than per household and seems to be a fair and timely solution to stop water waste.

If you have concerns, our meetings are public. My job and the council's job is voluntary, and I can testify that this council is here for the right reasons and genuinely wants to give back to our community. We all pay taxes, just like you. We all want Towanda to be a wonderful place to call home.

I am available on my cell phone to answer any questions, and plan to continue to communicate via the city's webpage, at monthly meetings and throughp the Towanda Herald. It is not that we don't see or hear you when you have a problem; we simply don't typically comment on social media, as we prefer to maintain transparency in a professional setting.

Please come to the meetings, visit city hall, or call, and please consider a YES vote for the additional sales tax that will go specifically to remedy our water woes.

Sincerely,
Mayor Jennifer Shaults