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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cook County Administrator James Joerke Resigns

October 29, 2024 – The Cook County Board of Commissioners shares the unfortunate news that today they have received the resignation of James Joerke, Cook County Administrator. There will be a short special meeting of the Cook County Board of Commissioners on Friday, November 1, at 8:30 a.m. to take official action on his resignation.

As shared recently, James' wife suffered a fatal accident in Kansas City, MO. This devastating tragedy understandably compelled James to take a leave of absence from his role to deal with family issues.

Here are excerpts from a message Joerke shared with his Cook County staff today:

“This morning, I submitted my resignation letter to the County Board. I have responsibilities in Kansas City that require my immediate and ongoing attention, and I am no longer in a position to continue serving as administrator. That said, I feel deeply connected to Cook County both as a place and a community. In the last four years I have had the privilege of forming strong friendships and working relationships with some of the most amazing, interesting and accomplished people I have ever met. These relationships have given me joy and inspired me, and I will cherish them for the rest of my life. While I will be relocating to Kansas City for the foreseeable future, I hope to return to Cook County as a full-time resident again when circumstances allow. I cannot think of anywhere I would rather live.”

Additional excerpts from James' letter of resignation:

“I am proud of what we have accomplished together... I am also proud of the employees of Cook County Government. Their professionalism and commitment to public service are both inspiring and humbling. They care about Cook County, and daily there are examples of our team members going beyond the requirements of their positions to provide exceptional service to County residents.”

The Board of Commissioners, leaders and Cook County employees are deeply appreciative for all of James' significant efforts and accomplishments throughout his tenure as Cook County Administrator.

The Board will work with County Leadership to take swift and proactive steps to seek, vet and appoint the very best candidate to fill this critical role. Rowan Watkins remains the county's Interim Administrator for the time being. Plus, several dedicated leaders and members of the community have stepped up to offer their assistance during this transition.

The Board will continue to share updates with the community as new information becomes available.

About Cook County, MN



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Cook County encompasses the sovereign nation of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; the City of Grand Marais; the Townships of Lutsen, Tofte and Schroeder; and unincorporated areas in the easternmost part of Minnesota's North Shore. Cook County Government values transparency and strives to deliver superior services and programs in a fiscally responsible way. We value the dignity of all County residents and seek to create a community that provides opportunity for all. Many of our offices are in the Cook County Courthouse at 411 W 2nd St, Grand Marais 55604. Other departments and facilities, such as the Airport, Community Center, Highway and Sheriff are located nearby. Call 218-387-3000 or visit: <https://co.cook.mn.us>

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