

City of Winter Park
~~Civil Service~~
 (1974) Fire Chief
 Finlayson

Tuesday, June 4, 1974

Winter Park Soon To Air Fire Chief Probe

By ROSEMARY SIMMS

Sentinel Star Staff

WINTER PARK — The Civil Service Board's investigation report, which exonerated Fire Chief Robert Finlayson of all charges of poor administration, is expected to be presented to city commission Monday at a 4 p.m. work session in city hall conference room 109.

According to Acting City Manager Bob Proctor, the report will be received by the commission at that time for discussion. Formal action will probably be taken at the next day's commission meeting at 4:30 p.m.

The commission action will be to either confirm or — by at least a 4-1 vote — overturn the Civil Service Board's decision "there is not competent, substantial evidence to support any charges of misconduct," against the fire chief.

PROCTOR — WHO made the allegations against Finlayson and urged the board to investigate — said

he was "very happy the Civil Service Board investigated the allegations and the matter is coming to a conclusion."

Proctor said he preferred to withhold further comment until the city commission receives and acts on the board's decision.

Finlayson, fired March 20 by former City Manager Frank Wooten and reinstated March 27 by the city commission, was investigated by the board at the insistence of Proctor and the city commission.

THE INVESTIGATION report, prepared by the board's chief examiner, John Schmidt, did not include statements from Wooten, who drew criticism from the commission over the dismissal of Finlayson. Wooten has since resigned.

The probe by Schmidt directed itself to five areas. The allegations and Schmidt's findings included:

- The charge of mishandling a



ROBERT FINLAYSON
 ... Airing due next week

fire which destroyed Old Lyman Hall at Rollins College was not substantiated.

- A charge the chief released

reports to the news media was true. However, the statement released did not appear to be "out of place."

- An allegation the chief did not cooperate with the city commission during its meetings wasn't supported.

- A charge of mishandling bid specifications for a fire truck was found to be false.

- Allegations the chief did not follow procedures of the city manager could not be determined since Wooten refused to comment.

THE REPORT said an attempt was made to speak with Wooten concerning the allegations, but upon contacting his residence, Schmidt said he was told Wooten was "barely able to speak above a whisper."

The person was asked by Schmidt if she could transmit the message to Wooten and call back later and "this was agreed upon." However, when Schmidt phoned Wooten's

home again, he was told the former city manager had been "out of contact with the situation and away from Winter Park for a considerable time and he had been under a doctor's care and was unable to give an interview."

A statement by Proctor — which said he had nothing further to offer regarding allegations contained in his memo — read he never had and does not have "any personal animosity regarding his association with Finlayson.

"MR. PROCTOR said he and chief Finlayson had discussed the situation subsequent to the writing of the memo and he felt he and the chief had reached an understanding and could work together in their relationship, management and department service," Schmidt's report said.

The investigation report did not include any statement from city commissioners.

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