

# Fire department to get once-over from consultants

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the little sentinel

Should the Winter Park Fire Department acquire a fourth station, increase its salaries for paramedics or buy a new pumper truck?

Last week city commissioners approved the hiring of a consulting team to assess its fire department in an effort to "upgrade effectiveness and increase efficiency."

The team of managers, fiscal experts and productivity specialists will determine, for example, whether more equipment and manpower is needed or whether firefighters waste their time between calls.

In return for the study, the Management Improvement Corp. of America will receive 90 percent of the

first year's savings to the city not to exceed \$14,940.

City Manager David Harden said MICA, which is headquartered in North Carolina, has conducted several studies for city departments.

Last August, MICA completed a "Parks Analysis and Cost Saving Guide" for Winter Park that saved the city \$29,000, Harden said.

Harden said the study will be launched in the next few weeks so the results hopefully can be implemented in the 1982 budget.

"I am looking forward to it," Fire Chief Sid Ballou said. "I'm sure it will be an inconvenience but hopefully overall, it will be profitable for both the city and the fire department."

Basically, the MICA consulting team will target in on four major areas: organization and management, operations, manpower and equipment, and facilities.

The fire chief said he hoped the team's conclusions would substantiate his position that the department needs more equipment and manpower and better salaries for paramedics.

Ballou said last month he would ask for a "substantial" pay increase for paramedics in the 1981-82 budget to bring salaries up to par with other Central Florida departments.

Compared with other fire departments in Orange County, only Pine Hills pays its paramedics less than Winter Park, Ballou said.

One of Winter Park's six paramedics quit Sunday to go to a higher-paying fire department in Orange County, Ballou said.

MICA also will be studying the feasibility of the city's acquisition of the Goldenrod fire station which is now surrounded on three sides by the city, Ballou said.

"If a fire broke out in that area, Winter Park firemen wouldn't know whether the fire truck was there or not," Ballou said.

Ballou also said the fire department is in need of another pumper truck. Currently, there are three pumpers, one of which is 20 years old, he said.

The city has as backup vehicles one minipumper and a 1947 Mack Truck pumper. If the city purchased another pumper, the 20-year-old model could be used as a reserve.

Depending on the make and equipment, a new pumper is estimated to cost between \$75,000 and \$150,000, Ballou said.

"It's the same difference between buying a Volkswagen or a Cadillac," Ballou said. "I would anticipate buying a Volkswagen."

WINTER PARK - FIRE DEPT.