

Fire union, city move toward pay agreement

By Mark Andrews

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — The union that represents Winter Park Fire Department lieutenants and other mid-level officials has reached a tentative agreement with the city that calls for an average 6.85 percent pay raise this year.

After talks broke down last week, the 11-member bargaining unit discussed setting up picket lines at City Hall Friday to protest the city's refusal to set a figure for salary increases next year. The union is affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters.

But the stalemate was resolved when negotiators for the city and the union agreed that the employees could bargain for more pay next year as part of a two-year contract.

Along with other city employees and firefighters, the nine lieutenants, the city fire inspector and fire marshal received an across-the-board 3 percent pay raise effective this week.

They are also eligible this month for merit raises based on performance. Those raises will range from 0 to 4 per-

cent, and are supposed to average 1.25 percent.

In addition, union members would be eligible for \$286 a year in hazardous duty pay and get another 1.6 percent across-the-board raise because of their job classification, if the contract is ratified by members and approved by the City Commission, said chief union negotiator Larry Niren.

The tentative agreement also calls for higher incentive pay for members who earn college degrees, more pay when they work in a higher job classification, and would allow them to carry over more vacation time to subsequent years.

Switching to a 14-day work cycle, rather than the current 28-day format, is expected to let firefighters be paid for more overtime they work, rather than having it canceled out by vacation or sick leave that may fall within the same period, Niren added.

City human resources director Pat Moran declined to discuss terms of the tentative agreement this week because city commissioners had not seen it.

The commission is expected to meet in closed-door session within the next few days to talk about the contract and must ratify it in an open meeting before it takes effect.