

Civil Service Board says

On-duty firemen shouldn't be CSOs

By VICTOR ASSERSOHN

A squad of Community Service Officers should not be formed from firefighters on duty at the fire station, the Civil Service Board has recommended.

Board member Anne Hamilton took a close look at the suggestion by Commissioner Tom Ivey that the time of firefighters could be better used while they are on duty.

"It would appear to be a service that should be recommended for serious consideration, but using on-duty personnel would create a problem in adequately and safely providing fire and rescue services," said Mrs. Hamilton in a report to the Board.

The Community Service Officer concept—similar to the one operated in Orlando—in which unarmed uniformed officers do minor traffic reports and handle other minor police complaints such as barking dog reports, should be undertaken by either off-duty firefighters or people hired for the job, she said in her report.

"The personnel I talked to did have a positive response to the concept but only with off-duty personnel. I did not find that the firefighters were sitting for long periods of time twiddling their thumbs and on the other hand you cannot expect a shift on for 24 hours to be in constant motion.

"I think the concept of having a CSO is very nice, but they can't be someone on duty. They don't know when they are going to get a call which they will have to go out on...I don't understand how that would be a logical way of doing it," said Hamilton.

"I think our recommendation is that the CSO concept is certainly a worthwhile program to consider not for on-duty personnel, but to use off-duty personnel if they are willing to participate," she added.

The board accepted the recommendation which will go to the city commissioners for consideration.

Fire Chief Mike Molthrop told the board: "If this was available to the firefighters as a part-time job I think they would be receptive to it."

The idea of the CSO program in Winter Park was suggested by Commissioner Tom Ivey after he and other members of a ten-member delegation were involved in a minor accident while returning from Orlando International Airport. They had just flown in from North Carolina where they had been looking at the Public Safety Officer program.

Commissioner Ivey had suggested that instead of firefighters sitting around the fire station, they could better use their time in the community service program.

The CSO program is seen as a watered down version of the controversial Public Safety Officer program where police and firefighters are combined into one force.

The city has already spent about \$5,000 sending a party of ten on a fact-finding mission to Durham and Winston-Salem in North Carolina last August and are now planning on spending another \$2,000 to send four people to Sunnyvale, California to look at that city's program.

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