

Fire chief makes plea for trainer

Commission again balks at creating full-time job

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WINTER PARK — A full-time fire training officer is high among the fire department's priorities this year, Chief Mike Molthop said Tuesday.

Molthop, for the second year in a row, urged the city commission to include the position in its budget for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. For the second year he encountered skeptical city commissioners who wanted to know why the assistant fire chief could not be the training officer.

"The training is more than a full-time job itself," said Molthop.

He said the increasing load of managerial duties he and the assistant chief must perform makes it impossible for them to give the needed emphasis to training.



Molthop

The police department has a full-time training officer. Molthop said he checked the professional fire departments in 11 nearby cities and all of them, except Winter Garden, have full-time training officers.

Since the fire training position was eliminated seven years ago training has been provided part time by a firefighter. It has been partially funded by the Orange County School Board through its on-the-job training curriculum.

The city commission authorized funds last year for a firefighter to handle emergency medical services training part time in addition to regular full-time duties.

Molthop said a comprehensive training manual must be developed before the training program can hit high gear. That requires extensive research and continual updating of material because firefighting

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equipment, methods and requirements keep changing.

The Winter Park Fire Department receives more calls for emergency medical services than for fire-fighting. This means firefighters get more experience with emergency medical techniques than they do with fighting fires.

Molthop said the department needs a full-time trainer to help firefighters learn to deal with many situations. "Fire equipment has changed considerably but my main concern is the chemicals, hazardous materials, radioactive materials that come through the city daily," he said.

The city would spend about \$17,000 in fiscal 1985-86 in overtime for the part-time fire training officer, Molthop said.

Mayor Hope Strong Jr. said he is not convinced a new position, at \$30,919, must be created to handle training. He asked City Manager David Harden and Molthop to see if a vacant position can be dropped from the department's fire prevention section and a full-time fire training position be created.

Harden and Molthop also will examine the possibility of keeping a part-time emergency medical training officer.

The next budget workshop will be Sept. 4 and 5 at 7:30 a.m.