

Outlook - Sept. 5, 1985

Training officer still sought for firemen

For the second straight year Fire Chief Mike Molthop has personally pleaded his case before the city commission, asking for a full-time fire training officer for his department. The commission, not convinced of the need, again gave a thumbs down to the request, telling Molthop to find another solution.

The new position, which has been sought by the department the past four years, was the topic causing the lion's share of discussion during last week's budget meetings. More meetings are slated for Sept. 4-5 at 7:30 a.m. in Room 200 City Hall, 401 S. Park Ave.

Molthop urged the commission last Monday and Tuesday to make room for a training position in the fiscal 1986 budget. The primary duties of the officer would be to research and develop a comprehensive training manual, which would require continual updates. Like a year ago, however, the commission asked Molthop why assistant fire chief Larry Granger couldn't handle the duties.

Molthop responded by stating increased managerial functions make it impossible for him or Granger to provide the necessary emphasis on training. The training position, eliminated seven years ago

by the commission, has been filled part-time by a firefighter and partially funded by the Orange County School Board through its on-the-job training curriculum.

Last year, the commission authorized funds for a firefighter to handle emergency medical services part-time in addition to regular full-time duties. The city would spend about \$17,000 in the next fiscal year for overtime for the officer. If a full-time training position is created, as proposed by Molthop, the cost would be \$30,919.

"Training is of major concern to all departments," said Molthop.

"You can do a lot more with trained people than you can with the untrained. I am concerned about the safety of workers and the public. I just want to make sure we have a professional operation."

Molthop added the fire department receives more emergency calls for medical treatment than for firefighting, sharpening workers' medical emergency skills but leaving them largely unpracticed in firefighting. He insisted a full-time trainer is needed to help firefighters remain updated with the newest equipment and techniques.

After much discussion a possible solution was forwarded by the com-

mission: Perhaps dropping a position from the fire prevention bureau to create the training officer. The three-workers bureau, widely praised for its effectiveness, has a position vacant. Molthop already has talked with city manager David Harden about the option and will present a proposal to the commission at Thursday's meeting. Molthop said removing a position from fire prevention will have an effect but feels he has a workable solution. "I think I have a proposal which will cover all the bases," he stated. "Eliminating one out of three positions in fire prevention will have some influence, but it is a proposal that was taken after considering what was good for the department overall."

Molthop did not want to disclose the plan's specifics until he met with the commission.

In other budget news, meanwhile, the commission is still trying to find ways to balance \$10,878,776 in departmental budget requests with expected revenue of \$10,200,844. Harden has stated 118 programs--totaling \$9,958,321--could be funded. That leaves \$242,523 remaining for capital improvement projects and 42 other departmental requests which are below the cut-off point.