

City to talk to applicants for fire chief

Appointment could take from 1 week to 3 months

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WINTER PARK — A fire chief could be appointed as early as next week if the replacement comes from within the city's fire department.

If the city decides to open up the application process, however, it could be more than three months before a permanent chief is named, Assistant City Manager John Litton said.

"We've had several applications and inquiries from all over, but we're not accepting any of those right now until we decide if we have the person right here," Litton said.

Three members of the fire department have applied for the position and will be interviewed by the end of the week.

The chief's position opened last month when Fire Chief Sid Ballou resigned to become Maitland's fire chief. Assistant Fire Chief Michael Molthop became the interim chief.

Molthop, who has been with the department since 1972, is one of the applicants. The others are fire marshal Jim Humphrey, who also joined the department in 1972, and fire inspector George Hulette, a 14-year veteran.

The department has 45 full-time employees. The new fire chief will earn between \$24,750 and \$35,200, depending on experience. Ballou, a Winter Park firefighter for 14 years and chief for five years, earned \$30,500.

Litton said there were no plans to place the fire and police departments into one safety division headed by the police chief, a move that Maitland and Eatonville have made in the past year.

"It's an option we're going to keep open," he said. "I personally think it has some distinct advantages."