

Report urges consistency in fire department

By Yvonne C.T. Vassel

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — Fire department officials should enforce personnel rules consistently and make greater efforts to treat all department employees in a more sensitive manner, according to a report compiled by Anne Hamilton, chief examiner of the city's Civil Service Board.

As a result, the board has decided to do quarterly surveys during the next year to see if improvements are made.

Hamilton interviewed 36 of 44 fire department employees.

"It was a very interesting experience. I found everyone willing to share concerns about the situation," Hamilton said.

Problems in the fire department came to a head last month when

James Moreland, chairman of the Civil Service Board, asked Hamilton to investigate complaints.

Hamilton presented her report Monday at a Civil Service Board meeting. About 25 firefighters and City Manager David Harden attended.

Hamilton said some firefighters mentioned difficulties trying to contact fire marshal Jim Humphrey, their representative on the board. Some said supervisors asked them why they wanted to contact Humphrey. Some also were questioned about attending board meetings. Firefighters said some were cautioned not to discuss problems with the board unless they first discussed them with department management.

Two months ago the board discussed the issues and sent out a memo telling personnel they could contact Humphrey directly without going through the chain of command and could attend meetings if they were off duty.

According to the report, firefighters said department policy was not evenly enforced and management also should have to obey the policies. Hamilton

Please see REPORT, 4

4 The Orlando Sentinel, Wednesday, January 22, 1986 WP

REPORT

From 1

said firefighters told her "policies and procedures should not be continually changed to accommodate a troublesome situation."

"There is a need for all personnel to be dealt with fairly and equitably, not only in matters of discipline but in promotional opportunities. Arbitrary and discriminatory standards affect staff morale," the report said.

In the report Fire Chief Mike Molthop was described by firefighters as a "hard worker; good organizer; presents good ideas; provides good P.R. with city government and the public, hence improved image of the department; established better training; obtained better equipment; and has made an indication through recent actions that he wants to overcome the

problems."

Those interviewed also said Molthop and other department managers need to develop communication and management skills.

Harden said the city this year is using training sessions to help all department heads improve their rapport with employees. Molthop was not available for comment Tuesday because he was at a training seminar.

"Some staff also acknowledged that some department personnel will never be satisfied. Others feel it will take a long time to improve the situation. Another problem noted is that some personnel are troublemakers," said the report.

Firefighters told Hamilton they want better pay and more opportunities to attend fire training classes and educational programs unrelated to fire service. She said they also criticized the system of rotating captains and changes in shift assignments for firefighters.