

# Winter Park fire chief backs suspension of chief marshal

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By Karen Pankowski

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — Fire Chief Dennis Sargent has asked the City Commission to reinstate the suspension of Chief Fire Marshal Steve Painter.

Last month, the Civil Service Board voted to overturn Sargent's three-day unpaid suspension of Painter and replace it with a letter of reprimand.

Painter had appealed to the board after he was suspended for not notifying superiors immediately of Lt. Fire Inspector Lyn Wright's intent to write a letter accusing Police Chief Jim Younger of sexual harassment. Painter had said he did so when he had the letter in hand.

In a Sept. 24 letter to commissioners, Sargent said the matter could have been settled without becoming public had it been promptly reported to him.

The board has "substituted its judgment for mine, and has thereby created a significant problem for me in maintaining order and discipline in the Fire Department," Sargent wrote, calling the suspension "deserved."

The City Commission would need a 4-1 vote to overturn the Civil Service Board's decision. No date has been set for the commission to consider Sargent's request.

An investigator hired by the city reported that he had found no evidence that Younger sexually harassed Wright. The Civil Service Board is conducting a separate investigation into Wright's charges.