

fire chief's

# Finlayson Steps Down Officially, Leaves Town

WINTER PARK — Former Fire Chief Robert C. Finlayson submitted his official resignation Tuesday and left the city without comment, according to City Manager Robert D. Proctor.

Finlayson gave his letter to Proctor while picking up his last pay check and turning in city uniforms and equipment. He also collected personal items that had been left in his city car.

FINLAYSON WAS relieved of his duty Jan. 13 after city officials said he failed to report his whereabouts for three days. He announced his plans to resign to the Winter Park Sentinel

before consulting city officials.

Chief Inspector Edwin R. Ballard has been appointed acting fire chief.

Proctor said Finlayson told him the one day's overtime pay five fire fighters received last month for time they did not work was an "oversight."

PROCTOR SAID the city will not pursue the matter but that the extra pay will be deducted from the fire fighters' next pay checks.

The overtime pay was revealed, Proctor said, when one of the fire fighters questioned the extra day's pay on his check. The

matter was then reported to Proctor and investigated, he said.

The five fire fighters were on the same shift and had earlier complained to Finlayson about having to work Christmas and New Year weekends.

PROCTOR SAID no action will be taken against the fire fighters. "They were concerned. They knew it wasn't right and reported it," Proctor said.

Finlayson said he has signed a two-year contract with Boeing International Service to act as fire chief of an American air base in Turkey.

## No Regrets About Chief's Resignation

BY JOHN BECKER  
Staff Writer

There seemed to be no feeling of regret around city hall and at the fire department's main station this week following the resignation of Winter Park Fire Chief Robert C. Finlayson.

City Manager Robert D. Proctor admitted that he notified Finlayson months ago that he (Finlayson) should begin looking for another job because he would eventually be fired. Several members of the fire department this week claimed the former chief lacked necessary leadership skills.

"I had been working hard with Bob to insure a smooth running department," Proctor said Tuesday. "But there was a lot of friction with his officers and men. And he had some problems of his own." Proctor said the problems between Finlayson and his men were getting worse, especially in

the last four - five months.

"I think it was better for all concerned, including Finlayson, that he leave," Proctor said.

Members of his own department who wished to remain unidentified said Finlayson seldom showed up at major fire scenes. They said they did not have confidence in his technical ability.

One fireman said he was almost glad Finlayson didn't show up at a fire because he was afraid he (Finlayson) would have to make a decision.

Of those interviewed, many said Finlayson had created a morale problem among the members of the department because of questionable administrative decisions.

Proctor officially relieved Finlayson of his duties last Thursday after he said he read a news story in which Finlayson claimed he would resign his job on Monday.

"He is officially resigned as of today," Proctor said last week. "As far as I'm concerned what he said in

that story is his resignation and I am accepting it."

Finlayson's leaving stemmed from his erratic behavior last week when he did not report for work all week. Proctor said he had a meeting with him Monday and he didn't see him the rest of the week.

Finlayson never called to say he wouldn't be at work and several attempts by firemen to reach him were unsuccessful.

He officially submitted his resignation to Proctor Tuesday morning. It was

reported that he has a two-year contract with Boeing International Service to serve as fire chief of an American air base in Turkey. He was unavailable Tuesday to confirm the report.

Operations Commander Edwin R. Ballard has been

appointed by Proctor interim fire chief. Ballard has been with the department for 27 years serving the last three years as first deputy chief. He was made operations commander when the title deputy chief was abolished.

Asked if he would seek the position as permanent chief, Ballard said, "I don't know."

He added he doesn't have time to think about that now. He said he was just trying to get things sorted out in the department.

When questioned whether he would recommend Ballard for the post, Proctor said he would have to talk with him first. "I don't even know if he wants it. I've talked with him briefly about it, but nothing is definite. I'll talk with him some more about it before we do anything."

Proctor said if he doesn't select someone from the department he will advertise for a new chief. He said he will set up a "small committee" to review the applicants. "We could get as many as a hundred applicants and I'll need some help to whittle them down to four or five."

He said he might ask a Civil Service Board member to serve on the committee. "I will at least keep them apprised of what we are doing," he said.

He said if he goes the application route he will select the person he thinks should get the job. It will then be up to the city commission to approve the selection.

Proctor said he doesn't know when he will begin the search for a new chief.