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Harden: Firefighter's sexual discrimination charges 'unfounded'

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CITY OF WINTER PARK

By VICTOR ASSERSOHN

Complaints by a woman firefighter of alleged sexual discrimination at the Winter Park Fire Department and a secret black book—revealed exclusively in the **Outlook** last week—are unfounded, says City Manager David Harden.

"We have looked at the complaints and we believe the charges are unfounded," said Harden.

A formal complaint alleging sexual discrimination over driving the fire department's tower truck was made by firefighter Judy Manor to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Orlando last week.

And Manor, who has been with the fire department for nearly three years, revealed that some officers keep a secret black book in which only bad comments are noted.

After the complaint about the black book had

been pointed out to Fire Chief Mike Molthop last week he said, "I can assure you that I shall issue instructions, as I have issued instructions in the past, that if an officer wants to make a notation on an employee's performance then he should at the same time counsel the employee."

Referring to the black book, Harden said that city staff had reminded fire officers that observations made on firefighters should be discussed with the employee.

"When observations are made they should be discussed with the employee at the time and fire officers have been reminded of that point," said Harden.

"We have investigated as far as we feel is necessary. We found that the fire department does keep notes on its people and they do record positive and negative points and they are kept on

everybody for evaluation. That is good personnel practice," added Harden.

Asked to comment on the situation, city commissioner Gary Brewer said, "The first I had heard of it was what I read in the **Outlook**. I asked for a memo immediately because I wanted to be aware of what was going on. It is an internal problem and I don't think that it is prudent to make a comment at this time."

Harden said that up until Tuesday the city had received no formal notification from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Miami to whom the complaint had been sent by the Orlando office.

It is expected that it will be three months before a decision is made on whether there is a case of sexual discrimination for the City of Winter Park to answer.