

Finlayson (1973)

# Fire Chief 'Clear Air' Apologizes To Volunteers

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WINTER PARK — Fire Chief Robert Finlayson said Tuesday he did not mean to upset his department's 15 volunteers when he indicated to city commissioners Feb. 28, the ideal situation would be "an all paid department."

"I mean no animosity toward any one individual," said the fire chief, who indicated several volunteers took the remarks as a personal attack.

FINLAYSON SAID HE HAS talked about the situation with Mayor Jim Driver and the mayor felt an effort should be made "to clear the air" on the issue.

The fire chief said he was answering the city commission's questions

"from a fire chief's outlook in any department."

From a "completely professional" view, the fire chief said a fire fighting officer always likes to know exactly how many firemen he can count on. In the case of volunteers, Finlayson said, "you can't actually count those people until they are at the scene."

HOWEVER, FINLAYSON said he wanted to stress the city has "loyal and faithful volunteers and "when they are available they respond."

"It's the system I am not satisfied with and not the people," said the fire chief, who also indicated he wanted to "sincerely apologize" for any volunteer he may have upset.

Finlayson also pointed out the fire department has 39 full-time paid

firemen, and he said the department attempts to only summon the volunteers on a major fire.

THE FIRE CHIEF also indicated a survey taken on volunteer response time from June 1 through Feb. 26 was perhaps unfair since many of the volunteers are out of town during the day. The survey indicated 3.8 per cent participation by the 15 volunteers.

The chief also pointed out an all paid fire department results in lower homeowners insurance rates, and he said this is one of the reasons a fire chief always feels an all paid department is better. Finlayson said current ratings by insurance underwriters rate four volunteers equal to one full time paid fireman.

However, Finlayson stressed that he "recognizes the value" of the city's volunteers and "their dedication."