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Volunteers battle against charges by safety director

By STEVE BARNARD
Farmington Editor

Non-professional, underpaid, and mercenaries are terms that have been used in Farmington Hills Police Safety Director Ronald Holko to describe some of the city's firemen.

The information was taken from documents obtained by the Observer & Eccentric from a three-way correspondence between a fireman's wife, Holko and firemen from Station No. 4.

Emphatic with our editors because they have been harassed for years by the so-called dedicated volunteer firefighters, Holko said in a letter dated March 1.

There's threat of quelling each time the district gets their own as an indication of a non-professional, underpaid group. This is not dedication and interest in public safety, it's selfish and political gain at stake," he said.

Holko's remarks came in response to a letter written by a fireman's wife inquiring of Holko why he was absent from the Feb. 9 council meeting.

The firemen attended the meeting in force to protest council consideration of paying \$2,000 a month to a private ambulance firm for human resource services. Subsequently, the council authorized the contract.

"Do you feel the fire department does not need your support?" Can you show no interest," the woman asked.

"I DEEPLY sympathize with the men that they are supposed to function under a man such as yourself when you have no interest which is very evident."

In his reply, Holko said he was absent because "I do not condone their threats and actions. They violated their own regulations and bypassed the chain of command. As an administrator, I cannot support such violations of regulations by personnel."

After hearing of the council's consideration of a contract with a private ambulance firm, 74 firemen signed resignations. Holko claims the firefighters violated regulations by directly confronting the action about the human resource service.

The firefighters' memo defended their action in directly approaching the city council.

We strongly believe in chain of command. But we just as strongly point out that it works both ways.

The method that you and City Manager George J. Mayfield used to bring this to the council's attention has all of the appearance of having attempted to speak a through without public disclosure.

You left the fire department no alternative but to take a position before the city

"The community is a loser by having people claiming to be 'volunteer firefighters,' who are, in reality mercenaries trying to get paid for every minute they can claim they put in fire fighting, training, or whatever."

— Ronald Holko

attempted to correct the situation that you had created," said the memo.

The human resource contract came before the council through the city manager's report. Items on that report are undated on the agenda.

Animosity between the firemen, Holko and Councilman Fred Luchman has been steadily growing since the human resource issue came to light in February.

It reached a peak at the March 1 meeting when Luchman threatened to introduce a proposal to disavow with the volunteer force after personnel from Station No. 4 refused to sign a duty roster.

In a response to Holko's letter, Station No. 4 personnel blasted Holko for his attitude towards the firefighters.

If you think that your \$2,000 a month as a professional have been accepted by all departments, you are grossly mistaken. This is one department which certainly doesn't accept you at all. It is our information and belief that most of the members of the police department don't either," said the memo authored by Station No. 4 Assistant Chief Don Archiberg.

In his letter, Holko said the firemen were angry because they are paid \$150 an hour plus tuition and mileage while attending fire training schools and \$2 an hour when responding to emergency runs.

"THE COMMUNITY is a loser by having people claiming to be volunteer firefighters, who are, in reality, mercenaries trying to get paid for every minute they can claim they put in fire fighting, training, or whatever," he said.

Holko did defend what he termed a minority of dedicated firemen.

I feel sorry for the truly dedicated firemen who are fortunate to have who must be embarrassed by the actions of the others. Unfortunately, these good men are in the minority. But the community and I appreciate their individual efforts and dedication," he said.

In their memo, Station No. 4 personnel

criticized Holko for alleged lack of support for the firefighters.

The men of Station No. 4 doubt you (Continued on page 9A)



What's this enthusiastic gentleman going crazy over? It's Farmington's first "Fantasticon" comic book convention. To see why this

affair was such great fun turn to Page 3A (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Board to decide

Pink slips loom for teachers

By RON GARIBINSKI

At least 15 Farmington school teachers could receive pink slips for the 1976-77 school year.

This is the decision the Farmington school board must make at its meeting Tuesday night in Warner Junior High School.

Due to reductions in revenues and declining enrollments, the district must notify teachers by the third week in April that they will be retained next year.

Teacher layoffs total 15, assuming a successful renewal millage election. In the event of an unsuccessful renewal election, this list would increase by even greater.

Farmington schools Supt. Martin Van Amerdyne said.

The time is rapidly approaching when we must notify teachers that the district must lay them off," said school board President William Cortes.

"THE DISTRICT must notify teachers 60 days before the end of the school year that they will be laid off. So that a school board must act on the matter at their next meeting," he continued.

We don't know what our financial situation

will be for next year, so we must prepare ourselves for the worst and decide on the number of teacher layoffs that must be made," Cortes said.

The Farmington School District notifies teachers every year that many will be laid off the coming year. According to union contracts, the district must notify them before April 15 that their contracts will be terminated.

We are trying to be as realistic as possible when we recommend 15 teacher layoffs for the coming year, Van Amerdyne said. We have looked at the number of students, school programs and revenues we will have for next year and have arrived at a figure we feel is reasonable.

Since I don't believe in wholesale layoffs, I only am recommending to the school board that they approve the number of layoffs we have arrived at based on our latest facts and figures," the superintendent said Friday night.

By only terminating 15 teacher contracts now, we are trying to protect as many classroom jobs as possible," he said.

VAN AMERDYNE said the administration has based its layoff figure on the projected reductions in enrollments and revenues and the number of leaves due to teacher attrition for next year.

Whether the number we have arrived

at is good, we don't know for sure. But at least we must get the school board to decide on it before time runs out," Van Amerdyne said.

It should be discussed at a public meeting so all those involved in the decision will have an opportunity to be heard," the superintendent said.

Van Amerdyne said it is impossible to know how many teachers possibly will be laid off next year.

It is hard to say who will get it and who won't, but it is certain, based on the figures we have, many teachers will be laid off," he said.

It depends on several factors, but the most important being the millage election and favorable state aid, he said.

To operate our programs on the same levels we are accustomed to, we must receive the same revenues from the state and millage that we have received in the past," he said.

The district plans to lay off at least 15 teachers initially, and if the millage election must be held off before April 12.

If the millage is delayed then a worst case scenario is to come back later in June and lay off another 15 teachers.

BOTH CORTES and Van Amerdyne believe the millage election will be successful.

We have received a sufficient number

of teachers now that they will be laid off said Cortes. If we don't notify them 60 days prior to the end of the school year, then we must lay them back in September even if we don't have the funds available. That's the way union contracts read.

When determining the number of teachers to be laid off, the district projected the worst possible situation. It could be in the millage failed and state aid was reduced even further.

Based on these figures, the administration then estimated what programs it could retain for that year.

The district probably could make cuts in other areas besides teacher layoffs, but even those areas cannot be determined yet because of our financial situation," said Cortes.

Here we are just before the millage vote and we don't know what our situation is concerning state aid. It is just an exercise in guessing what will happen," Cortes said.

Whether or not that number 15 will be agreed upon by the school board Tuesday night is unpredictable.

They might decide it is a realistic number or they may not, but the board must discuss and talk about it before the deadline is in an unprepared position," he said.

C'mon, ride with Ron on the big, yellow fire engine



Keeping a vigilant eye out is Observer & Eccentric reporter Ron Garibinski, who spent a day fulfilling a dream of being a fire fighter. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

By RON GARIBINSKI

The giant, mobile water dragon loomed before me.

For years the Walter Mitty syndrome has filled me with dreams of being a fire fighter. Now, I had a chance, for just a moment, to live that dream.

The City of Farmington just had received delivery of a 200-gallon, 900-hp pump. One of the advantages of being a newspaper reporter is being able to step into someone's shoes for a few people.

I asked to climb behind the driver's wheel.

Slipping on the traditional fireman's rain coat, I felt myself grow a few inches tall. Every boy at one time or another dreams of being a fireman. I wasn't any exception.

Fire Chief Lt. Michael Golinette handed me the chief's helmet. I was 10 feet tall.

CLIMBING INTO THE CAB, I grasped the steering wheel of the 200-horsepower diesel-powered fire engine.

WHEELS.

The alarm blared in my ears. Here's the fire chief racing to a catastrophe.

me blaze. Only he can save the day.

CLANG CLANG CLANG.

The clanging in front of me scattered in a haze for the giant machine.

"Attention fire crews, this is Chief Garibinski. We've got a bad situation. All available personnel report for duty by the front door. I am commanded."

The rig swerved around the corner. An alarm dog dashed from harm's way. In the distance a cloud of smoke smothered the horizon. A red glow glared above the trees.

Would the fire chief make it in time?

Come on men, grab those hoses and pull. I shouted as the 2,000 feet of hose slowly unrolled out of the trucks' reels.

Curious residents pressed against the barriers to watch the fire crew labor to save the buildings.

"Now back, move back, leave the men some room to work. I commanded the crowd.

"Chief, chief, there's a little boy trapped

on the second floor of that building. I FLEW UP THE LADDER, grasping in an effort not to slip the young boy was huddled in the corner of his room. Black smoke poured through the room as flames licked under the doorway.

I flung the boy over my shoulder, raced to the window and started down the ladder.

Suddenly, I slipped and fell.

"Ron, Ron, come on down from the truck. We've got another assignment."

My heart was broken as photographer Harry Mauthe turned me away from the truck.

Rememberably, I took off my chief's helmet and the fireman's raincoat.

Oh well, it would've been fun, I thought. Walking away from the engine, I turned around and gave it one last look.

I had consolation. The new color for the fire engine is a pretty yellow-green.

Who wants to be a fireman, if you don't have a red truck, anyway?

Trio wins essay awards

Three East Junior High School students earned first, second and third place awards for their entries in the seventh annual Freedom Foundation essay contest sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance Group.

The school's top essayist, Stavroda Peterson, Ann Arbor, and Linda Tremont will receive honor certificates. A plaque with the name of the first place winner, Stavroda Peterson, will be presented to the school.

Nearly 1,000 eighth grade students from 310 Michigan schools submitted entries in the contest, which is conducted with the help of Farm Bureau Insurance agents across the state.

Stavroda's essay has been entered in statewide competition from which 10 winners will be selected. Prizes include a \$500 savings bond, a \$200 bond for second place and \$100 bonds for third, fourth and fifth place. The remaining in the top 10 will each receive a \$50 bond.

Governor William Milliken broke the judging panel to determine the winners.

Other members of the panel include Secretary of State Richard Austin, U.S. Congressman M. Robert Carr, State Senator Earl Nelson, Michigan State University President Clifton Wharton Jr., and University of Michigan President Hudson Purnell.

In addition to the prizes for the students the schools of the top three essayists will receive a large American flag for display.

The annual contest, started in 1968, is designed to give Michigan young people a chance to seriously consider their role in the country's future by writing on the theme, America and Me. The contest is open to all eighth graders.

As a sponsor of the contest, Farm Bureau Insurance Group has received the George Washington model from the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge five years in a row.

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COME FLY WITH US

The Farmington Community Education department is offering a variety of classes for those who want to keep themselves busy. From flying to weaving, it's all explained on Page 3A.