

Fire Commissioners Column.....

Bill Madison

You may have seen that our fire chief Mark Beck has announced his retirement effective this July and that the fire district is now conducting a nationwide search for a new chief. The notice asking for candidates went out to numerous professional publications the first week of January and so far we have received 51 requests for information packets from 20 different states. The announcement asks for candidates with a minimum of ten years full-time experience with a combination fire department, chief officer experience and a bachelor's degree or higher.

We have asked candidates to complete the information packets and return them to the district by the end of February. Using a point system check off sheet, the three commissioners will review the applicants and score the candidates. We will invite six or eight of them to come to the area to participate in what is called an "assessment center exercise". The assessment center and interviews by the Board of Commissioners are scheduled for mid-April.

The assessment center is an all day series of exercises used to evaluate various skills in areas that might reasonably be expected in the execution of a fire chief's job. For example, they might be asked to participate in a tabletop drill as the on-scene commander in a fire or emergency operations scenario, an administrative or a leadership exercise or perhaps asked to solve a workplace personnel issue. Writing and public speaking abilities as well as fire department budget skills may also be examined in the assessment center. The fire district will be asking civilian leaders in the community and professional fire department personnel from the surrounding areas to assist in evaluating the candidates.

Following the assessment center there will be interviews, background investigations and a psychological management profile test for the finalists before a job offer is made. We hope to have all this completed and an offer made by the end of May so that the new chief can be ready to start by July.

FYI we are planning on hosting "Chipper Days" again at the Tum Tum fire station this spring. The dates are set for Saturday April 10 and Saturday May 1st. Hours will be 9 AM till 2 PM. There will be a \$10 per load fee charged to cover the expenses of hauling and chipping the yard debris. Additional information will be forthcoming.