

Falls City Council Reverses Decision on Hiring Second Fire Department Driver

(KLZA)-- Following a lengthy executive session to discuss personnel Monday night the Falls City Council voted 7-0 to rescind a motion approved in May to hire a second full-time driver for the Falls City Volunteer Fire Department.

With Council President Jerry Oliver serving in place of Mayor Tim Hersh who was absent, the Council met in closed session with Police Chief Duane Armbruster, and Utility Superintendent Alan Romine. A bit later Fire Chief Ken Simpson and Assistant Fire Chief Jon McQueen were invited to join the closed session.

Eventually the Council reconvened in open session and Councilman Mike Dougherty made a motion to rescind the decision to hire a second full-time driver. Councilperson Judy Murphy advanced the motion with a second and the vote was unanimous.

Following the meeting Fire Chief Ken Simpson, who is now the only full-time driver for the Falls City Volunteer Fire Department admitted he was disappointed with the decision. Simpson said "for safety purposes he would have liked to have kept a second full-time driver, but right now the budget must mean more to the Council right now than the safety factor.

With two full-time drivers they were each working 56 hours per week. Since Ralph Gilkerson's retirement in May part-time drivers have been covering the shift that a second driver would fill.

That will come to an end on June 23rd. Chief Simpson's hours will change dramatically. He will go from working 24 hour shifts Monday's and Wednesdays with an 8-hour shift on Friday to working 8 a-m to 5 p-m Monday through Friday.

Assistant Chief McQueen asked about the part-time drivers being paid. The Council said as of June 23rd they will be paid only for fire-call hours.

Two weeks ago an idea was proposed to create a position of part-time police officer / part-time fire driver. That was not brought up Monday night. The Council said they will need to review the direction they want to go in the future.