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Search for new NWFR fire chief could take months



Committee formed to help select recruiting firm

By Stefanie Donahue

Less than two months remain before North Whatcom Fire and Rescue (NWFR) must appoint a new fire chief, at least on an interim basis.

William Pernet announced his resignation from the position in October. Citing an interest in pursuing other professional opportunities, Pernet said his last day will be Monday, December 31.

The district is currently overseen by Pernet, in addition to assistant chief Joe Noonchester, division chief Henry Hollander and other administrative staff. A five-member board of fire commissioners also oversees the operation of the district.

During a meeting on November 1, commissioners voted to form a special committee to recommend a recruiting firm to help search for a permanent fire chief.

At least two recruiting firms have expressed interest in contracting with NWFR, Hollander said. Commissioners have yet to determine how much they'll allocate from the budget to pay for the search and whether or not they want to recruit statewide or nationwide.

Either way, he said, "The process for hiring a permanent chief could take months."

In the meantime, commissioners are weighing who to appoint to the position on an interim basis once Pernet steps down in December. Hollander said his hat is out of the ring, since he'll be retiring in May of next year.

Pernet was sworn in as fire chief in 2015. He moved to Whatcom County from Tucson, Arizona in 2014 to serve as the district's division chief of operations. He brought 25 years of firefighting experience to the position.

To learn more, contact info@nwfrs.com or call 360/318-9933.