

Town Council to address fire, police merger

By DORA McALPIN
Staff Writer

The Chapel Hill Town Council tonight will address an independent consultant firm's report that, among other recommendations, calls for the eventual merging of the town's police and fire departments into a single public safety department.

The town should implement this plan by Sept. 30, 1986, the report says. Under such an arrangement, the department would be headed by a director of public safety. There would be deputy directors for police and for fire divisions.

The report, prepared by the Washington-based consulting firm Rusten Associates, says the arrangement would reduce administrative costs, provide for consolidation of police and fire department training programs, and allow coordination of crime and fire prevention programs.

Town Council member David Godschalk said there is merit in the idea of a merger, although opposition to the plan can be expected.

"But I think there's always some opposition to changing institutional arrangements," he said.

The report, which is a follow-up to a 1983 study of all the town's depart-

ments, was compiled this summer and released to the press Sept. 30. In the 1983 study, Rusten found serious problems in the police and fire departments that kept them from operating efficiently.

The latest report says that the police department has had significant improvements in management since the 1983 study, but the fire department "is a disheartening and sharp contrast to the police department and the progress it has made in the past two years."

New leadership is necessary to improve the morale and efficiency of the fire department, the report says.

It recommends that a new fire chief be hired by the end of next March to replace Everett Lloyd, who has been the town's fire chief since 1968. The new fire chief should come from outside the department, the report says.

Opposition and open animosity between fire department officials is one reason to change current leadership, according to the report. Low morale and high frustration among personnel also indicate a need for change, the report says.

"Clearly, this department is in desperate need of new leadership," the report says. "It would bring about a refreshing change in atmosphere if new blood were pumped into all positions above the rank of captain."

Some of that "new blood" might be current fire department personnel who would move into such positions as assistant fire chief, according to the

report. "But sweeping changes are sometimes neither practical nor possible," the report says. "In this case, it is probably wiser to bring about change in stages."

"The report makes 49 recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of the two departments. Most of these changes should be adopted whether the town combines the two departments or leaves them separate, according to the report.

Some of the most significant of the 49 recommendations follow.

1) The rules and regulations of both departments should be revised. The report says both departments are operating under outdated guidelines.

2) A female officer should be assigned to the police investigations division. This officer would spend half her time assisting the juvenile officer, who would be moved from the Uniformed Patrol Division to the investigations division under the plan outlined in the report. The rest of the female officer's time would be devoted to assisting other members of the division in rape and related cases and to working on general assignments.

3) The number of public service officers assigned to the fire department at any given time should be increased from seven to 11. Currently, public service officers spend most of their time working out of the police department and respond to police, fire, and medical emergency calls. They each spend roughly 28 days twice a year at the fire

department for firefighter training. Seven officers at a time are assigned to the fire department under the current system, but the plan outlined in the report calls for 11. The report also recommends that the firefighting training time for each officer be increased.

4) The fire department should consider dispatching the ladder truck for all dwelling and structural fires. The report says the ladder truck is seldom dispatched because "the fire chief doesn't like to see it used." Currently, the department usually sends two pumpers on each fire alarm, according to the report. In some cases, the department dispatches only a pumper or a pumper and a van, it says.

Council member David Pasquini said that, although the report will be presented to the council tonight, much of the responsibility for deciding on and implementing change will fall to Town Manager David R. Taylor.

"The fire department and the police department fall under the (jurisdiction of the) town manager," Pasquini said. "So the town council doesn't have any real power there."

"What I think will happen is that we (the council) will have a work session with the manager later on and we'll make recommendations about what we consider to be important.

"But as for change, that's strictly a management decision," he said.

Lloyd and Taylor could not be reached for comment Sunday evening.

5 Homecoming queen candidates announced

The Carolina Athletic Association has announced five candidates for Homecoming queen.

The senior candidates are: Susan

Camp, from Cary, sponsored by Granville Towers; Arlene Ferebee, from Fayetteville, sponsored by the Sweet Carolines; Jennifer Ferguson, from Charlotte, sponsored by the Carolina Choir; Katharine Kelley, from Atlanta, sponsored by the Senior Class Special Projects Committee; and Katherine Noesen, from Hendersonville, sponsored by the Loreleis.

The four girls not elected queen will make up the Homecoming court.

The candidates were interviewed by a panel of three faculty members and were chosen based on academic merit, campus involvement, personality and achievements, including extracurricular activities, outside interests, pursuits and goals.

Voting will be held Oct. 24 in Chase Hall, the Student Union and the Campus Y court. The queen will be crowned at halftime of the Florida State game Oct. 26.

Americans return to U.S.; hostages identify 4 hijackers

From wire reports

NEWARK, N.J. — Fifteen Americans who were passengers on the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro, including 11 who were hostages, flew home from Europe Saturday, landing at Newark International Airport.

At an early morning stopover in Sicily, some of the American hostages identified the four hijackers who held them captive for 52 hours aboard the ship and killed 69-year-old New Yorker Leon Klinghoffer, American authorities said.

The Americans, tired after days of tension and travel, were taken to a hotel to be reunited with their families amid tight security.

Hijacking suspect escapes

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials said Sunday that a Palestinian suspected of being involved in the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro left Italy for Yugoslavia soon after American authorities issued an arrest warrant for the man.

Mohammed Abbas was reported to have left Italy with a colleague on a commercial airliner shortly before 8:30 p.m. The two Palestinians were reportedly disguised as Egyptian soldiers or airline crew members.

Officials are planning a quick extradition of Abbas from Yugoslavia. However, Yugoslavia is known to have ties with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and it was not certain if the country would cooperate with the request by the

news in brief

United States.

D. G. Martin possible candidate

CHARLOTTE — Friends of Mecklenburg County politician D. G. Martin say the Democratic Party may be urging Martin to run for the U.S. Senate, but the idea of the U.S. House in 1986 may be a stronger possibility.

Martin narrowly lost to Republican Alex McMillan last November in the election for the 9th Congressional District seat. Martin had never run for public office but came within 321 votes of becoming the district's representative.

Observers debate trade mission

Gov. Jim Martin's trade mission to Japan might not produce immediate, tangible results, but could be prosperous in the long run, political observers say.

"I'm personally skeptical about whether you can go over there and just have your very presence drum up new business," said Michael Walden, an N.C. State University economist.

But Walden said the governor's 10-day trip would help convince the Japanese that one way to avoid protectionist legislation in the United States would be to invest in places such as North Carolina.

for the record

In Friday's story "Students advocate a minority center as BCC alternative," Lorinne Gipson's name was misspelled.

The Daily Tar Heel regrets this reporting error.

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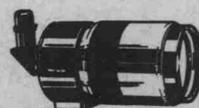
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