

Chiefland Fire Chief Evaluation Gives Him Another Year at the Helm



Fire Chief James Harris addresses Chiefland commissioners during his evaluation.

By Terry Witt
Senior Staff Writer

Chiefland Fire Chief James Harris received good ratings from his five bosses Monday night with relatively light written criticism.

Harris received a 3.25 composite score out of a possible 5 on his written evaluations by commissioners, which means he runs the department slightly above the expectations of the board.

Under the rating system, a 3 grade indicates a department head meets expectations, while 4 is exceeding expectations and a 5 is excellent.

Harris has been involved in a controversy with the county's public safety director David Knowles, accusing Knowles of trying to build a county-wide empire and take over Chiefland firefighting, a charge Knowles denies.

Two commissioners, Betty Walker and Chris Jones, gave Harris low grades on relations with other governmental agencies. Both gave him a 2 grade in that area, meaning he needs to improve.

But Jones also complimented the chief for doing well.

"I feel that Chief Harris has performed very well and has built good relations with his employees. He operates the department with compassion and commitment to say the least," Jones wrote. "In all honesty, Mr. Harris has become a little too personal with his opposition towards Levy County's funding and relations towards the city. However, this has not affected his quality of service provided by the fire department. It is my goal to bring all the commissioners (city and county) together and hopefully work towards common ground that is beneficial to all." Commissioner Teresa Barron, fire commissioner for the board, gave Harris the highest grades. She gave Harris mostly 4's and 5's and rated him 3 on dealing with other government agencies in representing the city. She also thinks he is correct about the county wanting to take over the firefighting duties of the city.

"The Chief was right about the County's plans to take over the fire department," she wrote. She thanked him for implementing the "fitness for Levy program."

Commissioner Rollin Hudson and Mayor Teal Pomeroy gave the chief mostly 3's, including his ability to work with other government agencies in representing Chiefland.

Harris's one-year contract gives him an annual salary of \$51,680.08, which is what he received last year.