

The Thrill is Gone; Officers Don't Want to be Chiefs in Ravenna

By: Geoffrey Cleveland
Chief
Ravenna Fire Department
214 Park Way Ravenna, Ohio 44266

A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

13 May 2011

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. This paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

Signed: _____

Printed Name: _____

ABSTRACT

The problem this study addressed was that there are no senior officers on the Ravenna Fire Department who are interested in the chief's position. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe reasons why current senior officers are not interested in the chiefs' position.

Research questions that were answered by descriptive and evaluative research:

1. Are expectations by RFD members to promote from within or externally for chief?
2. Why was there no internal interest in the position?
3. Are there problems with performance levels of officers who don't wish to be promoted?
4. Are officers being prepared for promotion by the RFD, are they preparing themselves and what incentives are needed to increase interest?

Procedures used for this project began with information collection by informal surveys and interviews of the Ravenna Fire Department members. Others were questioned and conversed with for relevant information also. Literature review included RFD and personal libraries with professional publications, publications available on the internet.

A survey was formulated with specific questions for each research question and was administered to Ravenna Fire Department personnel. The survey said the majority of the fire department members believe a combined internal/external search for a chief is typical while the literature favored promoting internally only.

The literature review revealed that the lack of interest in the chief position is a fire service wide trend. For the RFD, the answer from the survey blamed distaste for the political aspect of the position, low pay and lowered benefits for lack of interest. Performance levels of officers fluctuate according to various circumstances. Desire for promotion had no bearing on job performance.

Incentives are needed to increase interest in the chiefs' position, including an overhaul in the benefits package and a pay increase. It is also recommended that a combination of internal and external searches be made for the position.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT..... 2

ABSTRACT..... 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... 5

INTRODUCTION 6

 Statement of the Problem..... 6

 Purpose of the Study 8

 Research Questions..... 8

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE..... 9

LITERATURE REVIEW 15

PROCEDURES..... 28

RESULTS..... 31

DISCUSSION..... 48

RECOMMENDATIONS.....53

REFERENCES.....58

APPENDIX 1 – Questionnaire 60

APPENDIX 2 – Ohio Revised Code sec 124.34 64

APPENDIX 3 – Ravenna Muny Code flex time section 65

APPENDIX 4 -- IAFF Local 1340 grievance and arbitration contract sections.....69

APPENDIX 5 -- IAFF Local 1349 education contract section.....72

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Many fire departments have some of the same problems related to work attitudes, labor/management relations, labor motivation levels and supervisory motivation levels. Often these problems are as a result of the cultural behavior of department's members, which has been characterized and molded by influences that evolve as generations of firefighters and administrations cycle in and out over the years of the department's existence. Other problems are created by officers being members of labor unions. Of particular interest in this study is the effect these and other such factors have on officer motivation and their desire for career advancement.

All communities with a fire department face the question of chief officer succession. Many answer the question the same way by promoting lower positioned officers up through the ranks. Often, this method yields chief officers who do a good job of leading the department. Sometimes it perpetuates existing problems such as complacency, preferential treatment and lack of motivation among others. However, they can promote from within only if they have officers who desire further promotion. In January of 2006, the Ravenna Fire Department hired its chief from outside due largely to the fact that there were no internal candidates who desired the position.

The problem this study will address is that there are no senior officers on the Ravenna Fire Department who are interested in the chief's position. By most accounts, this problem has not manifested itself in ways that prove detrimental to the service provided to the community of Ravenna; positive feedback from customers and citizens outnumbers complaint investigations by a wide margin. The department itself however is being experiencing a few difficulties created by

the introduction of outside leadership and lack of promotional ambition; a mixture of cultures due to the latest chief being differently oriented to the fire service, power struggles due to the uncertainty of boundaries to be enforced old and new, resentment due to disagreement over decisions, struggles to increase performance levels in the face of officer complacency etc. Of course not all of these problems are due to the hiring of the chief from outside, but they are all related to the circumstances from which the need arose.

While the Ravenna Fire Department is experiencing some difficulties with the hiring of a chief from the outside, there have been more positives than negatives. There are more efficient labor/management relations, improvements of longstanding problems to the physical facility, unprecedented levels of grant funding acquisition for several needed projects (which are highly commended by the finance department), a wellness and fitness program was started which in turn made a sometimes drastic improvement in individual physical fitness and moral and so on. Most feedback indicates that the hiring of a chief from the outside has been a good move so far,” this time”. “This time”, as in the here and now, is not the perspective that the concept of succession is concerned with. If it does work this time does not necessarily mean it will be the best way to go next time. If the candidate pool is limited to external candidates, for whatever reason, the pool is shallower than it would be if there was internal interest. The pool was limited to external candidates the last time due to lack of internal interest.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe reasons why current senior officers are not interested in the next level of promotion, chief of the department.

This study will also provide information which may assist in deciding how important it is to have internal officers interested in the chief's position and how to motivate officers to aspire that level. It will also attempt to determine if this problem will be limited to one succession cycle or will it be ongoing.

Research Questions

The research questions this study will investigate are answer by descriptive and evaluative research:

1. Is it expected by Ravenna Fire Department members to promote from within or hire an external candidate for executive level positions?
2. Why was there no internal interest in being promoted to Fire Chief in the Ravenna Fire Department?
3. Are there problems with job performance levels of eligible officers who don't wish to be promoted to the next rank?
4. How are officers being prepared for promotion by the Ravenna Fire Department and how are they preparing themselves for Chief Officer Rank and what incentives are needed to increase internal and external candidate interest in the Ravenna Fire Department?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Ravenna City Fire Department (RFD) is a career staffed department with 20 members (including the secretary) and one on call. Each of three platoons has six members assigned; most 24 shifts are filled with four members due to scheduled time off and injury/illnesses. Four to six on duty members primarily staff one ALS ambulance and one heavy rescue engine while remaining prepared to be reassigned to the backup ambulance, backup engine or aerial ladder truck. Usually staffed with 4 fire medics, the RFD responded to over 2450 fire, EMS and other emergency calls in 2008.

The City of Ravenna is located in Northeast Ohio at the center of Portage County and is the County seat. We are about 40 miles southeast of the City of Cleveland. The City of Ravenna has a population of approximately 12,000 citizens. Due to automatic aid with our immediate surrounding community, Ravenna Township, our first due response area is populated with approximately 24,000 citizens. Other auto aid agreements designate us as initial responders for structure fires to the City of Kent (pop 28,000) and Kent State University (19,000 students) as well as Brady Lake Village, Charlestown, Rootstown and Mantua townships. We also have auto aid with Charlestown Township for EMS needs.

We are one of two departments in all of Portage County staffed 100% with full time firefighters. Because of county wide mutual aid agreements we serve the over 140,000 citizens in Portage County along with our part time and volunteer brothers from other communities.

Kent State University has a football stadium with a capacity of 30,500 people to which we are a part of the preplanned response for any large scale incidents. In our city and in other areas we are initial responders to, there are other athletic stadiums, arenas and areas of assembly ranging in capacity from 2000 to 7000.

The RFD has been contacted, by the Ohio National Guard to provide fire and EMS service to the Ravenna Arsenal. This facility, which is a US Army National Guard/Reserve training center, is over 21,000 acres and at times has a population of over 2,000 soldiers. Live ordinance is stored, often used in training and there is one live firing range on the property at this point. There are plans for the Ravenna Arsenal to become a nationwide military training destination. This facility is in a neighboring township that has a volunteer fire department. We are on automatic response for emergency medical service with this volunteer department between 6 AM and 6 PM due to the lack of volunteer firefighter availability during those hours.

We are home to the county's only hospital which is a level three trauma center. There are also numerous assisted living and nursing homes in our city and response area.

There is a heavy volume of rail traffic on three major rail lines that transport hazardous materials and other cargo through the City. One of these rail lines has a bridge that spans one of our main State Routes.

Manufacturing was once a major industry in Ravenna, providing a solid income tax base and jobs for citizens who populated the city with stable families and owner occupied housing. As higher paying jobs decreased and workers reached retirement age over the last few decades the tax base has dwindled and the stable family and owner occupied housing has evolved into an almost 50% rental unit housing stock. A significant percentage of population is on public assistance and fixed retirement income. The household incomes levels are almost \$10,000 below the county average of about \$47,000 (city-data.com)

Building construction in Ravenna began in the 1800s and many of those structures are the City's largest and remain occupied to this day. Many of these buildings are non compliant with current building, fire and safety codes either because is it not required or they have not been subject to the code enforcement process. Several industrial complexes dot the city; some empty some in use all in need of consistent attention code enforcement wise. Due to the fact that there has not been a Fire Prevention Officer since the mid 1980s, code enforcement has been inconsistent because the process has been left to personnel with other primary duties such as fire suppression and EMS response.

The Portage County Fire Chiefs association along with the Portage County Emergency Management Agency has formed a number of specialty teams comprised of firefighters and officers from around the county. There is a hazardous materials team, USAR and dive rescue teams, all under the over sight of the Portage County fire chiefs. Also under their oversight are the Portage County Fire Prevention Association and the Portage County Fire Investigative Unit. The National Fire Protection Association standard 1710: Standard for the Organization and

Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, recommends two engines, a ladder truck, (each staffed with four firefighters) an ambulance and a chief level officer be dispatched to working structure fires. No single fire department in the county is staffed well enough to provide this response to a structure fire. The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System is the only way communities in Portage County achieve this level of response. With the critical infrastructures, utilities, sports stadiums, hazardous materials usage, heavy rail traffic, older manufacturing facilities, older residential buildings, interstate roads etcetera, there are many potential dangers to citizens and firefighters that are anticipated by the fire department. This emphasizes the need for competent, interactive and assertive leadership. With such inadequacies in staffing levels, using NFPA standards as the norm, in Ravenna and throughout the county, each position in the fire service for these communities is critical.

The City of Ravenna continues to attempt to emerge from a fiscal condition in which the then current administration saw fit layoff personnel from the fire department in 2004. Of course layoffs created a tremendous emotional stress and strain within the department and throughout the city, as well as a physical strain on our human resources. There was much in- fighting between the mayor/safety director, the fire chief and the fire union which intensified already difficult relationships. As described by department members who were present at the time and before the layoffs, the mayor had a leadership style that created an uncomfortable atmosphere amongst many of his subordinates and many citizens throughout the county. This mayor had been in political office a total of 30 years, including time as mayor and time as a state legislator.

Eventually the fire budget was trimmed down to fund only top priority line items, taxes were increased and the laid off personnel were returned to duty. They were returned to duty but with many open wounds and a deepened distrust and distaste for management.

By 2005 the then current fire chief retired and the position was filled with an interim chief, who was a lieutenant eligible for promotion to captain at the time. He was the only one interested in the interim position. The procedures to fill the position with a permanent chief began and it was discovered that there was no internal interest in being the permanent chief. None of the officers were interested in permanently filling the position themselves.

There were a number of reasons for this lack of interest, according to the officers. One reason given was that they did not want to work directly under the mayor and have to deal with his personality. Not only did they not want to deal with his personality, they also did not trust him. They believed, as concluded from their observations, that unless you did the mayors bidding and became part of his inner circle you would be subject to indignities that were unpleasant and intolerable. Another reason, which seemed to be the main reason, was that taking the chief's position meant taking a pay cut. Since the chief was on salary and could not work overtime, this meant loss of income for whoever took the position. Pay cuts ranging from five to ten thousand dollars per year combined with the relatively undesirable 40 hour work week, loss of union membership and firm implantation in administration/management, no one wanted the position

Of course anyone who has the desire to be a chief might find reasons to be one which outweigh reasons not to be one. The bottom line is no internal officer was interested, thus the candidacy for the position was opened to external prospects. After a written test, an assessment

center and interviews with the mayor/safety director, interim chief and safety committee chair, the department hired its' first chief from outside of the department.

Effective on the new chiefs' first day in office was the resignation of the mayor who hired him. The scandal surrounding his resignation was affirmed with corruption convictions by federal and county courts. Those convictions also served to affirm the distrust by the firefighters and officers for the city administration.

Previously the department has had 6 chiefs ever since a full time chief's position was established in 1920. There had been a tradition of long serving chiefs promoted from within the department until the most recent hire in 2006.

This background illustrates some details of a complex relationship between the city, county, the firefighters, officers and chief. The current chief will be eligible for retirement in January of 2011. It will prove to be difficult to find candidates who have detailed knowledge of this background, i.e. current senior officers, to fill the chief position once it becomes open. This difficulty does not diminish the fact that a detailed knowledge of this scenario is necessary to most effectively and efficiently manage this fire department without the delay for a learning curve an external candidate will bring.

The potential impact this study could have on the Ravenna Fire Department is to describe the current state of affairs and practices in Ravenna and the fire service in a way which may identify strategies for chief officer replacement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Clifford (2008) simply believes that no one wants to consider or talk about their own mortality; however the concept of succession planning is concerned with preparing for what happens after I am gone. This is a very simple question that applies whether or not we are dealing with the issue of succession due to mortality, attrition, retirement, termination or resignation. It is all about “what will happen when I am gone?” and leaders have dealt with this question throughout the history of man.

Whether leadership had genuine concern for the organization or corrupted selfish reasons, the question of succession has been answered through every process imaginable. From deliberate plan implementation to default by seniority to centuries of war, many chapters of human drama have been played out over the millennia in answering the succession question.

In his enrichment journal article, Beery (2009) uses a bible passage in which Moses, right before his death, asks God to provide a successor to lead the people after his demise (Numbers 27:16, 17). God directed him to Joshua, whom He had already been preparing for many years. God’s spirit was in Joshua and forty years before Moses’ death, God had begun to prepare Joshua for the task of leading.

Other examples of succession included in the bible are Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and his disciples, and Paul and his disciples. Beery (2009)

Although we typically find no shortage of people willing to fill the leadership vacuum in most stable organizations, there are some instances in which a preferable number of candidates to choose from do not exist. In Fire Chief Magazine, Coleman (2001) observed that a few years

ago, he started hearing quite a few people complain about a curious phenomenon: Nobody wanted to move up to the higher fire service ranks. Battalion chiefs don't want to be chiefs, and captains don't want to be battalion chiefs. He began to wonder if the pool of those who desired promotion had gone dry.

This is a perception shared by many in the fire service and is a reality on the Ravenna fire Department. This perception for some and reality for others comes at an inopportune time when many of the fire service leaders feel we are at juncture in our history where we need the best, brightest and most highly educated candidates to take the reins from the previous generation. At the same time we are on the verge of a leadership vacuum, if in fact the well has gone dry.

Kelvin Cochran believes the fire service is going through a changing of its leadership guard. This is evident in the number of retiring tenured fire chiefs and fire service association executive directors. He believes that around 50% of the current fire service leaders are eligible for retirement. Mr. Cochran says that the top one-third of fire service leaders can be expected to retire in the next six years. Cochran (2007)

To further complicate the issue, Cochran goes on to state that chiefs will no longer hold their positions for long periods of time as they had been doing in the past. This means we need a change in the depth and character of the talent pool from which to choose our next leaders; if we want to continually fill what will become a relatively high turnover position with the best, brightest and most educated candidates, we will need a multitude of talented candidates. It also means that if we don't have that depth we will be seeing all manner of leaders, good and bad, in days to come.

Cochran describes the level of talent we will lose from the fire service in the next several years, “Chiefs who have endured for 20 or more years have not done so by chance. It's no small feat to survive four to five changes in mayoral administrations, city managers, board chairs and union presidents. Tenured chief fire executives have been a blessing to their community and to the fire service as a whole. Just look at what's happened the past 25 years as a result of their collective leadership. ICS, EMS, hazmat teams, NFPA and ICC standards, firefighter safety initiatives, customer service, stronger labor and management relationships, and wellness and fitness initiatives all are great innovations fostered by the fire service elite now set to retire.” Fire service credibility has grown tremendously and associations have increased their influence over matters at the state, regional and federal levels (Cochran 2007).

Replacing past leaders with the more educated individuals who serve for shorter terms may indeed be possible. With the difficulty college graduates are reportedly having with finding occupations in their preferred fields, the popularity of civil service positions is growing. Even in light of this current landscape, the Ravenna Fire department finds itself sparsely populated with formally educated types. It is questionable, among some fire service members, whether or not the formally educated person is the best type of candidate versus the more experienced anyway.

Even though the current Ravenna fire chief does not have the formal education and was brought in from outside of the department, the organization was able to avoid some of the below mentioned problems related to hiring from the outside. The Ravenna chief did not come into the job making drastic changes but generally added to and energized what was already there. It seems as though the author below does not consider hiring from the outside to be part of a succession plan when he states that succession planning ensures that an organization has the right

personnel to function at peak capacity. However, because of politics or other reasons, sometimes even the well-run organizations must go outside to hire a chief or other department staff leader. Not promoting from within can create turmoil within an organization. (Culp 2008)

He goes on to state that often the chief hired from outside of the organization comes in with preconceived notions on what needs to be fixed or improved about the department. This creates negative feelings amongst the units' members that can take a very long time to prevail over.

Many authors of succession plan outlines omit the ever increasingly present aspect of the officer corps with no promotional aspirations. This begs the question; how do you motivate the current officer cadre to become motivated to move to the next level? If nourishing internal candidates is preferable to hiring from the outside, as several authors seemingly have indicated, that question must be considered.

If the definition below is applied to the fire service in whole as an organization and not only to the individual fire department's internal candidates, we may very well succeed in creating the desired deeper pool of candidates. The only drawback would be for those who consider internal candidates more desirable.

Culp (2008) describes succession planning as a process where younger generations of a department are conditioned to take on more responsibility. Good succession-planning programs develop an employee's talent systematically; they build up the employees abilities which create a number of candidates to choose from for officer staffing and enhance skills in current assignments.

The NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (2008) section reviewed below seems to require a fairly detailed amount of community and organizational knowledge which gives the internal candidate the upper hand in fulfilling the standard. Noticing the prerequisite knowledge for officer 1 qualification includes information only internal candidates would know it is questionable if the National Fire Protection Association would favor, intentionally or by happenstance, internal fire officer candidates. While there is no verbiage that speaks directly to the question of internal versus external fire service officer succession, an external candidate would have to conduct an extensive internal investigation of an organization to achieve the level of knowledge the standard sets forth as prerequisite. If a department wanted to qualify an external candidate as officer 1 it would be more difficult to do, as opposed to an internal candidate; given the prerequisites.

4.1.1 General Prerequisite Knowledge. The organizational structure of the department; geographical configuration and characteristics of response districts; departmental operating procedures for administration, emergency operations, incident management system and safety; departmental budget process; information management and recordkeeping; the fire prevention and building safety codes and ordinances applicable to the jurisdiction; current trends, technologies, and socioeconomic and political factors that affect the fire service; cultural diversity; methods used by supervisors to obtain cooperation within a group of subordinates; the rights of management and members; agreements in force between the organization and members; generally accepted ethical practices, including a professional code of ethics; and policies and procedures regarding the operation of the department as they involve supervisors and members.

NFPA 1021 (2008)

An observation officers have made and they decry as a reason for no aspiration to the chief's position, is the complications the job has taken on. When one considers the expectations that are evolving from fire service leaders on a national level and are filtering down to the local level, the transition from Shift Captain and union member to Chief is change which will require one to step outside of the comfort of the union protective blanket.

The National Fire Academy is now requiring a four year degree for admission into the Executive Fire Officer program. This is the current stage of a trend which evolved from the requirement that you be a chief level officer or promotable from one step below to the need for a two year degree to the current four year degree requirement (USFA, 2009).

A degree is already a requirement or a basis for extra points on promotional exams for the Chief level officers on many fire departments. Philadelphia PA., Minneapolis MN, Virginia Beach VA, Houston TX, Vancouver BC fire departments to name a few (Kinney, 2009).

One only has to peruse the want ads for chief positions around the country to see that most of them have a bachelor degree requirement, as a minimum, in addition to experience and technical certifications. If this is one day going to be a requirement on the Ravenna Fire Department, senior officers may not be the only internal candidates that should be eligible for promotion; lower ranking, formally educated members may need to be considered.

There are a few firefighters on the Ravenna Fire Department who illustrate more scholastic aptitude having acquired associate and bachelor degrees. Though they currently lack extensive fire service experience, this may not be the case by the time the chief position opens up again. The questions will then be; do they have the desire? Have they been continuing their

education? Has the Ravenna Fire Department been including them in succession planning? Has the Ravenna Fire Department provided sufficient incentives to make the position something they desire?

The best qualified candidate for fire chief is one who wants it for a combination of balancing reasons, none of which must predominate; economic gain, increased power, influence and responsibility, lastly ego satisfaction. When one factor outweighs others, the possibility of frustration and conflict increase. When there is balance, ego satisfaction is inevitable, (Coleman, 1999, p 91).

If a candidate had at least one selfless reason for wanting the position, this would help him keep the balance and stay grounded and able to relate to his subordinates on a human level. In his 2009 National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project “Charge or Retreat” Don M. Kinney offers several selfless qualities of leadership, among others:

From Appendix D: (Selected) Suggested Qualities of Leadership

- Guiding others through modeling (in the sense of providing a role model) and through willingness to serve other first.
- Preoccupation with a role-a dedication that consumes much of leaders’ life service to a cause
- Ability to encourage and nurture those that report to them-delegate in such a way as people will grow (Kinney, 2009)

All of the reasons for wanting a Chief position have a common denominator; they are reasons for *wanting* the position and if you don't want the position you will not try to get it. One has to respect the Ravenna Fire Department senior officers for their honesty, at least they are wise enough to know they don't want the chiefs' job and aren't afraid to say it. Not wanting the Chiefs' position is not uncommon according to the literature included in this review.

There is a decline these days in the number of people who actually want the chiefs' position. The idea of succession planning is paralleled by the phenomenon of fewer and fewer people wanting to take the final step to be the successor. (Coleman, 2006, p 30)

The Ravenna Fire Department has an annual evaluation program cycle which has been in effect for the last three years and was implemented by the current Fire Chief who has been with the department since January of 2006. Prior to this time period there is no record of evaluations on file, so the lack these types of records offered the opportunity for those who felt they needed a fresh start, with a clean slate, to have one. This is one of the advantages or disadvantages of hiring a chief from outside of the department; the advantage is the baggage of negative aspects of the past does not have to influence the present or the future; the disadvantage is that some past serious transgressions may not be discovered before more similar or related damage is done. Nonetheless, RFD members had a clean slate when the latest RFD chief began his tenure.

This "fresh" start is contrary to recommended practice in *Managing the Fire Services*, second edition 1988, the International City Management Association (ICMA) which offers the thought that once a firefighter is hired, he or she must be continually evaluated and given feedback about performance. According to the author, not many personnel topics receive more attention than performance appraisal systems, which are frequently the basis for decisions

concerning pay, promotions, discipline, transfers, training and employee development.

Appraisals can help improve motivation and productivity and assist in career development.

In the Ravenna Fire Department the lieutenants evaluate two junior firefighters assigned to their shift, the captain evaluates the two senior firefighters and the lieutenant assigned to his shift. The chief evaluates the three captains. The first year evaluations were implemented they were done every six months or twice that year except for the captains. The chief needed a year to observe enough of their performance to make evaluations of the captains. During this year of evaluation the new chief was also attempting to slowly implement a few different approaches to service to the Ravenna community.

One such different approach is talked about by Alan Brunacini who believes that the O in management by objectives is now management by opportunities. This approach requires everybody to focus on customer service, listen to each other and help each other. Citizens, customers and co-workers (superior or subordinate) are all included.

This change in approach is an ongoing process that requires delicate implementation as does all changes that come from a new chief, especially if he is not originally from the department. Some of the changes RFD members are dealing with are; periodic performance evaluations, an emphasis on customer service with a non-judgmental approach, also maximizing and encouraging strategic planning input from all department members. Buy –in to these concepts by the senior officers and members is a slow, uneven process.

Not promoting from within can create turmoil within an organization. Often the outsider comes into an organization and immediately begins to correct the perceived past injustices,

procedure, policies and the like before fully evaluating the people and systems in place.

This common error creates internal dissension and a culture of distrust-the effects of which can take years to overcome. (Kinney, 2009).

While the changes weren't made immediately, they still leave a degree of the effect of distrust in some cases. Some changes, such as the implementation of a fitness program with new equipment and wellness physical exams, created more trust due to being viewed as an immediate benefit to the membership and having unanimous approval. The chief, having to evaluate captains under these circumstances, can be tempted to give low performance scores due to the slow uneven pace of commitment to these and other recently introduced concepts and directives. However what is seen across the board is a cadre of highly experienced and well trained officers dedicated to doing what they are used to doing and doing it very well.

A review of the captains' performance evaluations reveals officers that perform at an excellent level in most categories. It is not uncommon that though senior officers have reached the level where they are no longer interested in continuing to pursue the next level of promotion, it is not necessarily due to lack of ambition, perhaps they have reached a level of self realization and fulfillment: The motivation to realize one's own maximum potential and possibilities is considered to be the master motive or the only real motive, all other motives being its various forms. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for self-actualization is the final need that manifests when lower level needs have been satisfied.

Common traits amongst people who have reached self-actualization are:

- They embrace reality and facts rather than denying truth.
- They are spontaneous.
- They are interested in solving problems.
- They are accepting of themselves and others and lack prejudice.(Maslow, 1943)

One can understand the lack of desire for the next level of promotion if one can understand self actualization. Another consideration brought forth is the influence age may have on ambition. While Michalos ultimately found no support for his proposition and the results of his research suggest that age does not necessarily influence discrepancy perceptions between existing and desired level within the organizational hierarchy. Nevertheless it stands to reason that his findings are not absolute and his original hypothesis is applicable in some instances; perhaps in the instance of the Ravenna fire Department.

One of the factors that was hypothesized by Michalos (1985b) to influence the discrepancy perception between what one wants and what one has is age. Older individuals were proposed to have less discrepancy between what they wanted and what they had as well as less discrepancy between what they had and what they expected to have in the future. If this proposition were true in terms of career goals, it would suggest that older individuals are less ambitious and therefore more satisfied with where they are in the organizational hierarchy. (Judge, Erez, Judge, Johnson, Kennedy, Washington, 1994)

Ravenna Fire Department Rules and Regulations section 110.02 Training and education: The Department is committed to the continued training and education of its personnel. The goal is to instill confidence and professionalism among firefighters by providing basic, advanced, and specialized training in areas of importance to the community.

SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all Officers to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of their employees in order to help them improve through informal coaching as well as formal training.
- Schedule employees for training classes.
- Ensure that adequate training records are kept on their employees.
- Recommend reading or other training materials for employees' self-development.
- Broaden the employees' knowledge of their current jobs, new jobs and projects.
- Assist in the establishment of career paths, when applicable.

EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

It is an employee's responsibility to:

- Learn from work experiences and associations with peers and Officers.
- Affirmatively seek ways to self-educate and develop areas of weakness and potential.
- Receive prior approval before attending compensated schooling outside of the Department.
- Attend scheduled training classes and pass qualifying examinations.

- Apply and utilize the certification to the City's benefit.

There is intent to develop a more structured approach to officer development which will include an educational component. The City of Ravenna and its fire department are currently involved with several other communities to begin functional blending of services as a possible step towards forming a fire district. Within this effort is the recommendation and the intent to create a uniform approach to educational efforts and other fire department operations, including leadership development.

Functional blending provides the opportunity for a number of jurisdictions to share or combine their resources to provide a specific service. Some of the most common and successful ventures have included fire prevention, training, emergency response, dispatch, maintenance, administration, fire investigation, and public education programs. The operational approach provides the opportunity for communities to combine the total operational, staff and administrative functions to effectively provide services as a single agency while retaining local ownership. (Preuer and Associates, 2009)

Many other studies have been performed, much literature has been compiled and many historical episodes have been played out in reference to succession. While this author has a neutral bias and believes the question is not so much “should the succession candidates be internal or external?” but simply; wherever the best candidate comes from whom will perform the duties of the position most effectively, let us go there and get him or her. It is with this preconception the literature review was performed.

This review is an analysis of a small part of the whole of literature regarding the subject of succession. However, it has influenced the overall impression of the whole to the belief that the question of succession is most often thought of in terms of an internal advancement; in house candidates are groomed and prepared for the next position so when the time comes the best are selected and given promotions. This approach appears to be prevalent and expected so much so that it may be considered as the default natural human expectation and must therefore be factored in as a highly influential dynamic regardless of its basis in logic. With this in mind, the neutral bias originally brought to the performance of this study has been more or less tempered to include the belief of the human nature influence over the subject. Internal candidates may feel naturally entitled and expect, demand, fight or go to great lengths for the opportunity to be selected for promotions, if they want them, regardless of what any study or neutral biased policy may allow. Human willpower and determination might occasionally trump prerequisites and could propel the unlikely candidate to performing the duties of the position better than anyone else could predict.

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this applied research project is to identify characteristics of the Chief Officer Succession problem on the Ravenna Fire Department with the expectation that solutions to this problem would emerge. All procedures including interviews, surveys to include data collection and analysis, literature review etc, were performed by the author of this study; Geoffrey Cleveland. Descriptive and evaluative methodologies were used to guide the research in finding samplings of answers to the research questions.

Information collection began with informal surveys and interviews of the Ravenna Fire Department members to get first hand information on reasons for the problem of disinterest in the chief position as well as other department strengths and weaknesses. More information was accumulated over the last three and one half years of questioning and conversations with senior and other department members. Former Chiefs of the department, elected officials, city employees and citizens were questioned and conversed with for relevant information also.

Literature review began with local public, fire department and personal libraries of fire service professional publications. This review continued with perusal of publications available on the internet through the National Emergency Training Center online Learning Resource Center which allowed access to numerous National Fire Academy applied research projects and other relevant publications. Online access to the premium research database EBSCO host also produced other relevant publications.

A questionnaire was formulated with specific questions for each research question; it was vetted through OFE readers, revised and administered to Ravenna Fire Department personnel. The questionnaire was distributed to all current active uniformed department personnel and they were afforded the opportunity to complete the survey. The only question which further categorized respondents beyond being Ravenna Fire Department uniformed personnel was “what is your rank?”

The rest of the questions were posed with the intention of tallying the individuals’ perceptions and knowledge of fire service practices as far as promotion procedures were

concerned. More questions were asked in order to find out personal views to determine desire for aspiring to the highest ranks on the department. Further queries posed were for the purpose of assessing beliefs about departmental personnel performance. A final set of questions were administered to measure views on personnel preparation for leadership.

Full personnel strength for the Ravenna Fire Department is 18 fulltime officers and firefighters, one chief, one secretary and 10 part time firefighters. Only full time officers and firefighters are promotion eligible. At the time of the survey, there were 17 full time department officers and firefighters due to the retirement of one senior firefighter.

The surveys were collected and answers were consolidated onto a master copy in order to tabulate number of answers to each question. The master questionnaire also divided answers from each respondent as firefighters, lieutenants or captains if the question of rank was answered at all. In some cases it was not. In the end, the distinction between ranks was not used to categorize responses. The survey was divided by research questions with each research question being written across the top of the page at the beginning of each set of related questions. This allowed the respondent an opportunity to realize the reason for each question and consider the overall goal in answering each question since many respondents were uncertain of the purpose and intent of the entire project. This was the case even though each survey was prefaced with a cover sheet which explained the purpose and reason for the research project. Included in this explanation was a disclaimer meant to insure that no intent existed to identify respondents and match the survey replies to the respondent.

To summarize the procedures: The problem was identified, information was gathered through informal individual and group interviews, formal and informal surveys and also literature review was performed. This information was compiled, analyzed and discussion and result were included in the final phases of the study.

The disclaimer informed respondents that the surveys would not be used for anything other than the research project; yet there was suspicion and hesitancy to answer the questions entirely or, in a few instances, answer any of the survey at all. Suspicion of the implications of the survey was substantiated by comments addressed directly to the survey administrator; this author, Geoffrey Cleveland. The substance of some comments indicated suspicion of underlying motives such as planning for filling the chiefs' position because the current chief may intend to leave soon. Other comments indicated notions that the answers would be used for information on individuals to measure their promotional aptitude in the future. These suspicions were not alleviated by the disclaimer, in some cases.

Of 17 surveys distributed 15 were returned with 12 having all answers completed and three being incomplete. Five of six officers (three lieutenants and three captains) either answered the survey or identified their rank. One officer may have completed his survey and not identified his rank. If no rank was identified the answered survey was placed in the firefighter category of rank.

Respondent's answers were limited to choices provided in the survey and the survey only questioned firefighters on the Ravenna Fire Department. The unanswered questions, unreturned surveys and occasional suspicion of the motives of the city administration on behalf of the

personnel studied are part of the limitations of the procedures. Other limitations are with the experience and abilities of the author, combined with his position as chief of the subject organization. These factors contributed to constrained abilities to provide objective information analysis. Another limitation was the amount of information studied on the related subject matter. The impression this author gained is that there is a huge amount of information on the subject of succession. There being a limited amount of resources committed to the study of this subject resulted in the demand that much of the information be left without review. One person with divided duties performing the study limited the amount of information which could be properly analyzed.

To summarize the limitations, they existed for the persons being studied and their willingness to fully participate, the person conducting the study with limits on objectivity and resources, and the amount of existing information that was reviewed on the subject.

RESULTS

Research question 1- “Is it expected by Ravenna Fire Department members to promote from within or hire an external candidate for executive level positions?” This was answered by the literature and survey questions that follow.

While there was no literature reviewed on this question that was specific to the Ravenna Fire Department that addressed this research question, there was and is literature which reflects commonly held fire service expectations.

Culp (2008) describes succession planning as a process where younger generations of a department are conditioned to take on more responsibility. Good succession-planning programs develop an employee's talent systematically; they build up the employees abilities which create a number of candidates to choose from for officer staffing and enhance skills in current assignments.

Below, the author continues to advocate for internal succession planning to ensure that an organization has the right personnel to function at peak capacity. For many reasons, sometimes even the well-run organizations must go outside to hire a chief or other department staff leader. Not promoting from within can create turmoil within an organization. He goes on to state that often the chief hired from outside of the organization comes in with preconceived notions on what needs to be fixed or improved about the department. This creates negative feelings amongst the units' members that can take a very long time to prevail over.

The NFPA 1021(2008) section reviewed could possibly re-enforce the concept of internal candidates being preferable to external officer candidates. In light of the fact that prerequisite knowledge for officer 1 qualification includes information only internal candidates would know; it is unclear that the National Fire Protection Association would prefer chief officers to be promoted from within. However, internal candidates are more likely to be qualified by an organization than external candidates if the NFPA standard is followed.

60% of survey respondents favor creating an eligibility list from combined internal and external candidates. The next highest preference at almost 25% of respondents was to only promote the best candidate from within the department. (Figure 1.1)

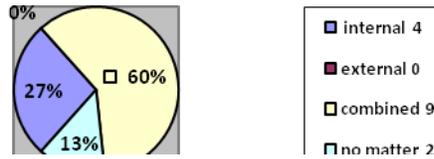


Fig. 1.1

Almost 53% of respondents believe most departments hire promote internally. 33% believe most fire departments create an eligibility list from internal and external candidates for promotion. (Figure 1.2)

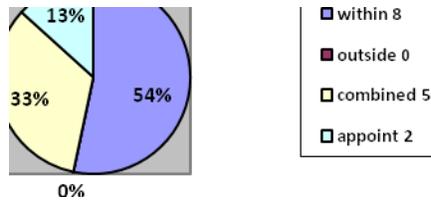


Figure 1.2

72% of survey respondents believe creating an eligibility list for promotion from both internal and external candidates would produce the best chief for the Ravenna Fire Department. 18% think the RFD should only promote from within. (Figure 1.3)

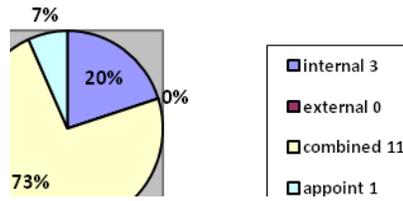


Figure 1.3

33% believe it is probably best for the department to get a different perspective by hiring from the outside, and 26% believe a chief from the outside can be more fair an internally promoted candidate since he usually has no alliances. (Figure 1.4)

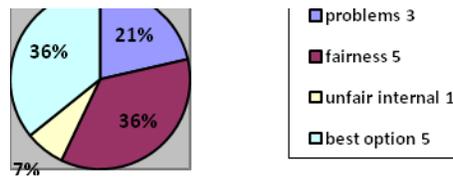


Figure 1.4

The survey of Ravenna Fire Department members exposed a majority difference of opinion to the literature review in reference to the question of the typically expected process to hire a fire chief. The majority of the fire department members believe a combined internal/external search is typical while the literature that was reviewed mostly favored promoting internally as the normal procedure.

Research question 2- “Why was there no internal interest in being promoted to Fire Chief in the Ravenna Fire Department?” There was once again no literature which addressed the Ravenna Fire Department question specifically. However the literature review did reveal opinions and research on the subject in terms of the wide spread fire service occurrence and occasions from other specific fire departments.

As verified by interviewing of department members, there is the perception of multi-layered job protection afforded by union membership that does not translate to the Chiefs’ position. There is not a lot of understanding of the civil service laws and rules that apply to the chief’s position and the same level of job protection comfort does not exist. Shift scheduling allows members to be on duty an average of 2 days a week. This schedule provides enough free time for members to supplement their income with additional employment.

Contractual scheduled days off are in addition to sick time which is allowed to be used for personal and immediate family illness, injury or medical appointments. Also if a member is injured on duty, he is entitled to 90 days injury leave after which up to 45 days of light duty are available. These are all benefits the membership has identified as those they are unwilling to part with

In Fire Chief Magazine Coleman (2001) notes that he begins to hear a lot of people complain that no one wants to move up to the higher ranks from captain on up. He wonders if the supply of those who aspire to the higher ranks has run out.

Coleman believes there is a decline these days in the number of people who actually want the chiefs' position. The idea of succession planning is paralleled by the phenomenon of fewer and fewer people wanting to take the final step to be the successor.

In his 2009 NFA EFO ARP "Charge or Retreat" Don M. Kinney offers several selfless qualities of leadership, among others:

From Appendix D: (Selected) Suggested Qualities of Leadership

- Guiding others through modeling (in the sense of providing a role model) and through willingness to serve other first.
- Preoccupation with a role-a dedication that consumes much of leaders' life service to a cause
- Ability to encourage and nurture those that report to them-delegate in such a way as people will grow (Kinney, 2009)

Survey results related to this research question supported the literature review and informal interview findings. The first survey question in this section was simply "Have you ever wanted to be Chief of the Ravenna Fire Department?" 68% of respondents replied no, 13%

replied yes and 19% replied “earlier in my career”. (Figure 2.1)

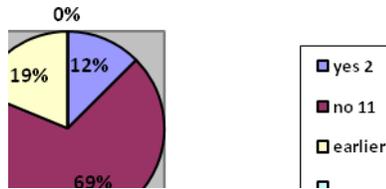


Figure 2.1

The next question asked for reasons why members wanted to be chief, if that was the case. Respondents were offered the option of providing multiple reasons. 54% “never had and never will” want the position. 38% wanted to improve the department and 8% wanted the “career satisfaction that comes with the title.” (Figure 2.2)

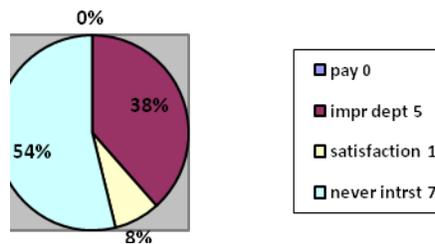


Figure 2.2

Respondents again were offered the option of giving multiple replies to the question “don’t you want to be Chief?” Dislike for the political aspects of the position was the most common answer chosen and overall represented the reason given 31% of the time. The next most frequently chosen answer was selected 26% of the time; there was more security and benefits in

union membership. Not enough pay came in at 23%. Work schedule difference was the reason 10% of the time while another 10% were never interested in the position. (Figure 2.3)

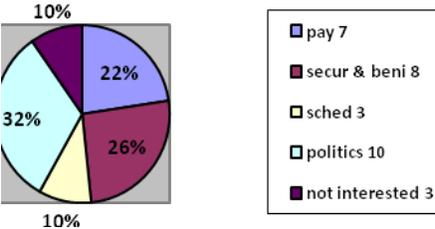


Figure 2.3

Reasons for not wanting to be chief at the last promotional was a question where, once again, multiple answers were allowed to be chosen. Dislike for politics was chosen 42%, politics 29% and dislike for the safety director was also 29%. Members who are unqualified for the position were allowed to participate in this survey to gather more statistical data from potential future candidates. (Figure 2.4)



Figure 2.4

While the literature review revealed that the lack of interest in the chief position is a fire service wide trend, the research question was specific to the Ravenna Fire Department in asking why there was no internal interest. The answer is in the survey results and the answer is the distaste for the political aspect of the position combined with the lowering of pay, benefits and job security.

Research question 3- “Are there problems with job performance levels of eligible officers who don’t wish to be promoted to the next rank?” Literature review on this question yielded subject matter that was not as straight forward and specific as it was for the last question.

A review of the captains’ performance evaluations revealed officers that perform at an excellent level in most categories. It is not uncommon that though senior officers have reached the level where they are no longer interested in continuing to pursue the next level of promotion, it is not necessarily due to lack of ambition, perhaps they have reached a level of self realization and fulfillment: The motivation to realize one's own maximum potential and possibilities is considered to be the master motive or the only real motive, all other motives being its various forms.(Maslow) In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for self-actualization is the final need that manifests when lower level needs have been satisfied.

Common traits among people who have reached self-actualization are:

- They embrace reality and facts rather than denying the truth.
- They are spontaneous.
- They are interested in solving problems.

- They are accepting of themselves and others and lack prejudice. (Maslow, 1943)

One may understand the lack of desire for the next level of promotion if the officers genuinely are self actualized.

Another consideration brought forth is the influence age may have on ambition. While the Michalos ultimately found no support for his proposition and the results of his research suggest that age does not necessarily influence discrepancy perceptions between existing and desired level within the organizational hierarchy. Nevertheless it stands to reason that his findings are not absolute and his original hypothesis is applicable in some instances; perhaps in the instance of the Ravenna fire Department.

One of the factors that was hypothesized by Michalos (1985b) to influence the discrepancy perception between what one wants and what one has is age. Older individuals were proposed to have less discrepancy between what they wanted and what they had as well as less discrepancy between what they had and what they expected to have in the future. If this proposition were true in terms of career goals, it would suggest that older individuals are less ambitious and therefore more satisfied with where they are in the organizational hierarchy. (Judge, Erez, Judge, Johnson, Kennedy, Washington, 1994)

Four survey questions were posed in relation to the third research question regarding officer job performance. The first question asked if it is abnormal if no members want to be chief. 43% of respondents believe there is a problem, 36% believe there is no problem and 21% are not sure. (Figure 3.1)

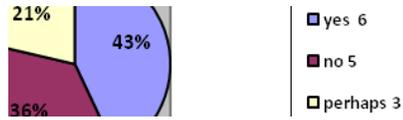


Figure 3.1

The next survey question asked if you should try harder in your current position if you want to be chief. Though given the options of saying it doesn't matter or you should do a better job when you reach the leadership position, 100% of the respondents believed you should do your best at whatever your position is. (Figure 3.2)



Figure 3.2

The third question was “are you doing the best job you can at your current position?” 7% would do better with a reason, 79% say yes they try to do their best. 14% say they are doing their best but others are not. (Figure 3.3)

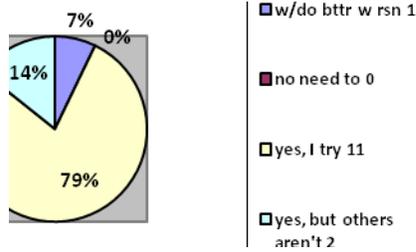


Figure 3.3

The fourth question on the survey related to the research question was “Do you think the officers on this department are performing adequately?” 19% say yes the officers are doing the best they can with what they have. 14% believe the officers have no ambition and it shows, 2% believe they don’t try hard and 65% reply that some are performing adequately and some are not. (Figure 3.4)

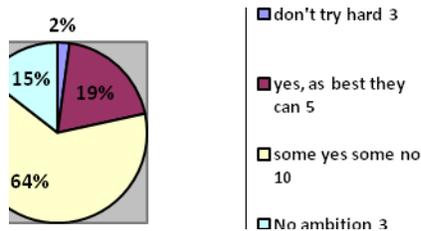


Figure 3.4

From the data, literature review, surveys and interviews it is evident that the officers cannot be measured as one entity. Performance levels vary and fluctuate according to the individual circumstances. Desire for promotion appears to have no bearing on performance.

Research question 4- “How are officers being prepared for promotion by the Ravenna Fire Department and how are they preparing themselves for Chief Officer Rank and what incentives are needed to increase internal and external candidate interest in the Ravenna Fire Department?”

A degree is already a requirement or a basis for extra points on promotional exams for the Chief level officers on many fire departments. Philadelphia PA., Minneapolis MN, Virginia Beach VA, Houston TX, Vancouver BC fire departments to name a few (Kinney, 2009).

A perusal of the want ads for chief positions around the country illustrates that many of them have a bachelor degree minimum requirement in addition to experience and technical certifications. It is possible that this could one day be a requirement on the Ravenna Fire Department.

There are some firefighters on the Ravenna Fire Department who have more formal education than the minimum required. They currently lack extensive fire service experience, however this will not always be the case; by the time the chief position opens up again they may be ready experience wise. The questions will then be; do they have the desire? Have they been continuing their education? Has the Ravenna Fire Department been including them in succession planning? Has the Ravenna Fire Department provided sufficient incentives to make the position something they desire?

The contractual agreement between the Ravenna Fire Department union members and the City of Ravenna allows for a percentage of college tuition reimbursement under certain conditions. The decision to exercise this option lies with the union member after checking with the chief to make sure the funds are available. The current chief will have been in office four

years by January 1st, 2010. As of this writing one union member has taken advantage of this provision in their contract under the current chief. He has attained two associate degrees.

The Ravenna Fire Department budget has a line item for education. Funds are appropriated for classes required to maintain certifications and other educational opportunities either ordered to be attended by the chief or requested by the membership. Members are encouraged to seek out educational opportunities and request to attend.

A number of leadership classes have been mandated by the chief over the last several years along with periodic classes required by previous chiefs, usually these have been for officers. Officers have been instructed to seek opportunities to attend Officer 1 and Officer 2 classes.

The Ravenna Fire Department has rules and regulations that are specific to training and education and is committed to the development of its members. Supervisors are charged with responsibilities that include:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of their employees in order to help them improve through informal coaching as well as formal training.
- Schedule employees for training classes.
- Ensure that adequate training records are kept on their employees.
- Recommend reading or other training materials for employees' self-development.
- Broaden the employees' knowledge of their current jobs, new jobs and projects.
- Assist in the establishment of career paths, when applicable.

Employees also are charged through the rules and regulations with responsibilities meant to further educate themselves and nurture the evolution of their abilities.

There were four survey questions related to the research question of preparedness. The first question was “Is the Ravenna Fire Department preparing members for its’ highest rank?” 47% of respondents believe nothing at all is being done for anyone. 35% believe a little training is provided. 18% reply that there is preparation but more needs to be done. None replied that there is a promotional test with reading requirements and training funds are available to everyone and nothing more should be done. (Figure 4.1)

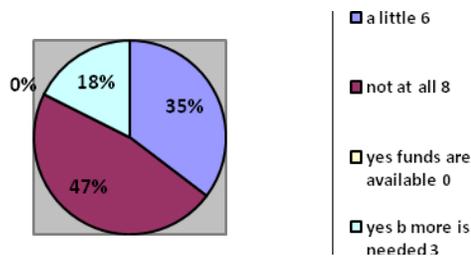


Figure 4.1

The next question was “Are you preparing yourself for the next promotion?” 43% said they train, get education learn from superiors and try to lead. 14% replied that they are not preparing and there is nothing they can do until the requirements for promotion are explained. Another 14% are preparing but feel that they should do more. 29% don’t want a promotion. (Figure 4.2)

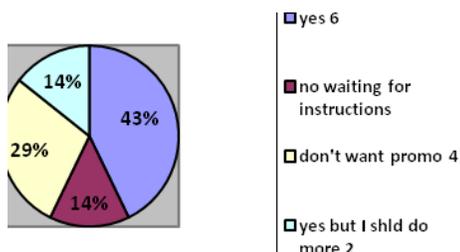


Figure 4.2

The third survey question was “Should the RFD provide members with everything they need to become leaders?” 41% replied that if the RFD wants leaders they have to mold them and give them everything they need. Another 41% answered that the RFD should supply what is need but all motivation should come from the individual. 18% said the RFD should not supply everything and an individual should be self motivated enough to be a leader in the first place. None believed that enough of what is needed is provided. (Figure 4.3)

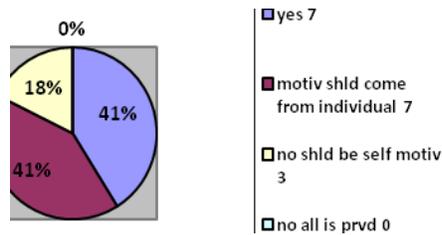


Figure 4.3

The fourth survey question was “I don’t want to be Chief unless....” 37% want more pay. 31% say nothing can persuade them. 19% want political leaders to become easier to work with and 13% already know they want the position. (Figure 4.4)

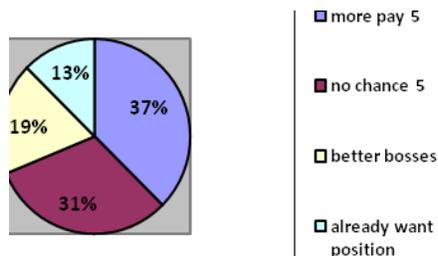


Figure 4.4

How are officers being prepared by the Ravenna Fire Department and how are they preparing themselves for Chief Officer Rank and what incentives are needed to increase internal and external candidate interest in the RFD?

The RFD provides CE training and college education funding for its' members that can be used upon request. There is workplace access to internet accessible computers and RFD purchased fire service publications, periodicals and national standard volumes. There are fire service professional multi-media training sources which allows for an immersion in fire service culture while on duty.

Officers do take advantage of the CE training and fire service materials on hand and in the immediate community however none have used the college benefit from the City of Ravenna available by contractual obligation. Incentives that are needed to increase interest in the chief position include an increase in pay so that members will either take less of a pay cut or none at all. The Chief should also have his own contract, negotiated separately from the payroll ordinance. This will allow the Chief to say what he thinks is important to him and have some hope of getting it. This personal contract would also provide him with more of a sense of security that is lacking once a member is no longer in the firefighters union.

DISCUSSION

With the increase of continuing education demands on fire service personnel along with more and more technical specifications for ems operations and specialty teams, it becomes

obvious why educated individuals and those with higher scholastic aptitude than what was acceptable in the past is no longer so. As the career becomes more administratively intensive fire service members will have to have a high tolerance for the learning process and be committed to being lifelong learners in addition to having the academic achievement (college degree) in hand when being considered for leadership positions and eventually even entry level positions. The National Fire Academy is now requiring a four year degree for admission into the Executive Fire Officer program. This is the current state of matters which evolved from the requirement that you be a chief level officer or promotable from one step below to the need for a two year degree to the current four year degree requirement (USFA, 2009).

A degree is already a requirement or a basis for extra points on promotional exams for the Chief level officers on many fire departments. Philadelphia PA., Minneapolis MN, Virginia Beach VA, Houston TX, Vancouver BC fire departments to name a few (Kinney, 2009).

The Ravenna Fire Department is seeing an increase in the formally educated members; recently two firefighters were hired with two and four year degrees. A third one with a two year degree and aspirations for a PhD is possibly going to be hired. Hopefully these individuals remain motivated enough to progress through the ranks during their careers. In the meantime, there is little hope of promoting an internal candidate to the chief position, formally educated or otherwise, unless the rank and seniority requirements are changed to attract those with more education but less seniority. Until those types of changes are made, there needs to be provisions for the transitional period to accept those less educated but more experienced, into the chief officer ranks. Given proper support and guidance, these types can be successful in the top positions of the fire service.

“Not promoting from within can create turmoil within an organization. Often the outsider comes into an organization and immediately begins to correct the perceived past injustices, procedure, policies and the like before fully evaluating the people and systems in place. This common error creates internal dissension and a culture of distrust-the effects of which can take years to overcome” (Kinney, 2009).

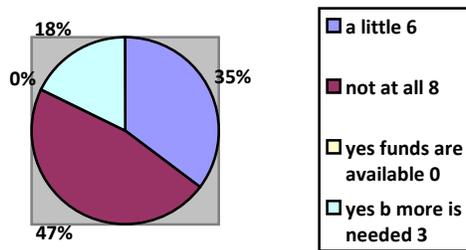
While it is established that many fire service publication authors favor the internal candidate avenue of succession, there needs to be more acceptance of and preparation for the external candidate. In the case of the Ravenna Fire Department, given that so few members have a clear cut desire for the top position, the external candidate may be the only choice available for a long time. This is the likely scenario given the compensation package for the rank and file as well as the chief. Neither is at the top of the food chain benefits wise, so attraction and retention of highly qualified and educated individuals is likely to be a challenge. This has been an ongoing situation in the rank and file as it has been reported that there has been a number of firefighters hired and processed over the years that move on once a more attractive job offer came along. This author has been witness to one such occasion in the last three years.

The survey revealed a number of perceptions that seem to be prevalent among quite a few members. These views are not consistent with current realities on the Ravenna Fire Department as far as professional development is concerned. There appears to be sparse acknowledgment that overall the RFD is and has been committed to providing funding for education and training

opportunities. Experience, training and education are cornerstones of personnel and officer development and the RFD provides for all of the above.

One perception is that little or nothing is being done to prepare officers for promotion;

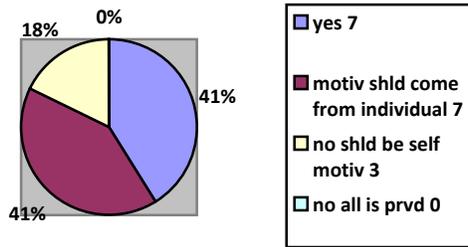
“Is the Ravenna Fire Department preparing members for its’ highest rank?” 47% of respondents believe nothing at all is being done for anyone. 35% believe a little training is provided. 18% reply that there is preparation but more needs to be done. None replied that there is a promotional test with reading requirements and training funds are available to everyone and nothing more should be done.



Another widely held perception is that the Ravenna Fire Department should provide either most or everything needed to become a leader;

“Should the RFD provide members with everything they need to become leaders?” 41% replied that if the RFD wants leaders they have to mold them and give them everything they need.

Another 41% answered that the RFD should supply what is need but all motivation should come from the individual. 18% said the RFD should not supply everything and an individual should be self motivated enough to be a leader in the first place. None believed that enough of what is needed is provided.



A significant number of RFD members seem to blame lack of proper external input for not having the ambition for promotion. There is little acknowledgment of the benefits currently available that require more self motivation and are in place already.

Realities;

IAFF Local 1340 2008-2009 Contract Section 30.02 EDUCATION-**COLLEGE LEVEL**: This section is for those employees wishing to further their education through college level related courses. For those classes and courses that employees desire to take, upon the prior approval of the Fire Chief, the Employer shall pay one-half (1/2) of the books and tuition upon earning a grade of "B" or better on completion of the course(s) for each quarter or semester. The Employer shall reimburse the employee for mileage and meals according to the rates established by City Council. The course(s) must be related to the duties performed by the employee. Request to attend such classes and course(s) shall be within the budget constraints of the Department but shall not be unreasonably denied by the Chief.

The Ravenna Fire Department budget has a line item for education. Funds are appropriated for classes required to maintain certifications and other educational opportunities either ordered to be attended by the chief or requested by the membership. Members are encouraged to seek out educational

opportunities and request to attend. Usually these are approved; a few have not been due to disputes over compensation.

A number of leadership classes have been mandated by the chief over the last several years along with periodic classes required by previous chiefs, usually these have been for officers. Officers were offered the opportunity to attend the 2009 Ohio Fire Chief's convention in order to take a few of the leadership classes and experience the fellowship and workshops. This was not approved due to the current economic climate. Officers had been instructed to seek opportunities to attend Officer 1 and Officer 2 classes. Shortly thereafter a scale back in non essential training was ordered by the safety director. One senior officer took the initiative and located scholarship monies to pay for the class anyway.

Ravenna Fire Department Rules and Regulations section 110.02 Training and education: The Department is committed to the continued training and education of its personnel. The goal is to instill confidence and professionalism among firefighters by providing basic, advanced, and specialized training in areas of importance to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe reasons why current senior officers are not interested in the next level of promotion, chief of the department. What follows are the recommendations that are suggested in light of the research findings.

The first recommendation related to the purpose of this study would be to accept the current situation as a condition of today's fire service environment. While it may be considered

normal and desirable to have internal succession as a rule, according to the literature review, this “rule” is the collective opinion of tenured fire service leadership, fellow researchers and other leadership authors. These opinions are influenced by history and it is probable that we are witnessing an evolution in how succession is handled on the Ravenna Fire Department and in the fire service in general. This should not be looked at as a “problem” but a condition which an evolved succession policy can address. Lack of internal interest in leadership is not unusual; as a currently popular saying goes, “it is what it is.”

It also appears that the condition of external succession needs further study. Authors, researchers and fire service leaders from the literature review seem to speculate the “logical” consequences of external succession rather than cite conclusions drawn from research.

As a result of the first recommendation and the survey results, it is further recommended that a combination of internal and external candidates be sought for the chief’s position as a rule. This would not only provide a wider pool of selection but it would ensure that any internal candidates would have to measure up to a larger fire service sample due to direct external competition.

Another recommendation would encourage internal and external interest in the chief’s position by overhauling the benefits package. Pay should be permanently increased beyond what the lower ranks make; this would remove economic discouragement which is what 37% of survey respondents say will increase their interest in the position. This 37% represented the answer most often given as a barrier to interest in the position.

Other benefits to be added include liberal use of flex time. Currently the written policy has strict guidelines for flex time accumulation and use. While the policy is not rigorously enforced, it should be modified to reflect FLSA intentions that include remote work place and work hour provisions. If not altered it should be eliminated as a written policy and an unwritten policy adopted. Written or unwritten, it should be developed with the Chief's input. A new flex time policy and an increase in the number of personal days would ease the transition from the 24 on 48 off work schedule that all internal candidates would experience. A personal contract between the city and the chief should be negotiated that would ensure employment, other benefits and vehicle usage for a certain number of years on top of the civil service status.

Benefit modification is critical to attracting a wider pool of highly qualified internal and external candidates.

The next recommendation is to continue developing policies and implementing practices that encourage personal leadership development. As survey results indicate, most of what is needed in the way of motivation should come from the individual. Policy type methods that cultivate individual motivation and ambition need further and more extensive research to be considered. What is currently in place as far as training and education benefits and policies should be information that every member has readily accessible knowledge of. These benefits and policies have to be reiterated at every opportunity.

The recommendations are summarized as follows:

- 1) Permanently open the chief position to internal and external candidates. This will be difficult for some department and city administrative personnel to accept after 150+ years of internal succession.
- 2) Further study the impact of external succession on other fire service models in order to properly prepare for problems that may result. Warnings from the literature review cannot be dismissed but they can be planned for.
- 3) Alter the benefit package. Increase the pay above the highest paid officer to approximately \$85,000. This rate is also competitive externally. Increase the yearly vacation allowance to six weeks; this is above the accumulation rate for the senior most officers. Increase the personal days to 4 which are two more than the union members get.
- 4) Flex time and telecommuting should be liberally allowed and self monitored. The chief should always be prepared to account for his time; however he should also be trusted to use his time appropriately. This should be a benefit of being a salaried employee.
- 5) There should be a separate contract for the chief of the department which has automatic benefit separations above the most highly compensated subordinates.

- 6) A percentage of the training budget should be allowed to be used for education, including college education, and travel to training destinations for the chief.
- 7) Department members should become knowledgeable in their contractual educational benefits which should be incentivized. Department members should receive incremental increases in certain benefits, such as an extra personal day for completing a leadership certification course or extra points on a promotional for college credits. Further incentives should be researched.
- 8) A succession plan should be incorporated into the strategic planning for the department.
- 9) A mentoring program should be added to the rules and regulations.
- 10) Leadership continuing education should be a requirement added to the rules and regulation.

It should also be emphasized that the political climate is different than it was when they formed their impressions. Officers should be required to get involved with projects and committees that involve the local politicians in order to build relationships. Members should also be made to understand that they may be able to make the department and its' service to the community better as opposed to someone from the outside who doesn't have the vested time and interest they do in the

department who will have to operate on a steep learning curve in order to get to know the characteristics of the community.

Potential candidates should also note that a work week based on 40 hours means they are home most every night, weekends and holidays. They can get a good nights sleep most of the time and there will be minimal heavy lifting which means less chance of injury. Lastly, the position of Chief of the Fire Department is one of the most respected occupations in the world and if one does a good job they have high standing and respect in the community.

REFERENCES

Beery, Kevin (2009). Moses-Joshua Succession From Joshua 1:1-18. *Enrichment Journal*

Retrieved July 19, 2009 from

http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200902/200902_000_Moses_Joshua_succession.cfm

Clifford, Stephen (2008). *An Owners Guide to Business Succession Planning*, 2nd edition, p. 8.

Cochran, Kelvin J. (2007, July 1) Parting Ways: Leadership transitions require planning and

respect. *Fire Chief*. Retrieved July 10, 2009 from <http://firechief.com/>

Coleman, Ronny J. (2001, January 1) Are our rank and file cut out for the rise to the top? *Fire*

Chief. Retrieved July 10, 2009 from <http://firechief.com/>

Coleman, R. (1999). *Going for Gold*. Albany New York: Delmar Publishers

Coleman, R. (2006, March). *Proverbial Horns: Homegrown or Hybrid?* FIRE CHIEF, 50(3) 30-33.

Culp, Hadden (2008 March 1) Career road map. *Fire Chief*. Retrieved July 1, 2009 from <http://firechief.com/>

Erez, Amir Johnson, Diane E. Judge, Timothy A. Kennedy, David J. Washington, Sandra K. (1994) *Employee Age as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Ambition and Work Role Affect* Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies Working Paper Series Cornell University. Retrieved September 30, 2009 from <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1244&context=cahrswp>

IAFF Local 1340 (2008) *Contractual Agreement with the City of Ravenna Grievance Procedure and Arbitration Procedure*

Johnson, Gary (2004 August 01) Follow the Leader. *Fire Chief*. Retrieved July 13, 2009 from <http://firechief.com/>

Kinney, Don M. (2009, May). *Charge or Retreat* (EFOP Applied Research Project) Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire academy. Retrieved September 2, 2009 from <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/pdf/efop/efo41455.pdf>

Michalos, A. C. (1985b). *Multiple Discrepancies Theory (MDT)*. *Social Indicators Research*, 16,

347-413. Retrieved September 10, 2009 from

<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1244&context=cahrswp>

Maslow, Abraham H. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370-396. advancedhiring.com. 17 Oct. 2006. Retrieved September 10, 2009 from

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self_actualization

Preuer, John D & Associates, Inc. Regional Fire, Rescue, & EMS Blending of Services Study Phase 1 Report (2009, August)

State of Ohio Legislature (2000, June). *Ohio Revised Code Ch. 124: Department of Administrative Services—Personnel. Section 124.34 Reduction in Pay or Position-Suspension or Removal. Subsection (C)*. Retrieved August 28, 2009 from

<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/124.34>

Questionnaire from G. Cleveland, class nine. Research questions are italicized and boldfaced.

1) Is it typically expected to promote from within or hire an external candidate for executive level positions?

1) Which, in your opinion, is the best source to get a FD chief from?

- Only promote from within
- Only hire from outside
- Create a list from both
- Doesn't matter

2) From what you know, what do most departments do?

- Only promote from within
- Only hire from outside
- Create a list from both
- Appoint by head administrators choice

3) Which would be better for the RFD:

- Only promote from within
- Only hire from outside
- Create a list from both
- Appoint by head administrators choice

4) If you hire a Chief from the outside then

- Problems are created with parties adapting to each other that aren't worth it
- He can be more fair to everyone since he usually has no alliances
- It is not fair to the members
- It is probably best for the department to get a different perspective

2). Why was there no internal interest in being promoted to Fire Chief?

1) Have you ever wanted to be Chief of the RFD?

- Yes
- No
- Earlier in my career

2) Why do you or did you want to be Chief? (Check all that apply)

- Higher pay
- Improve the department
- Career satisfaction that comes with the title
- Better position from which to serve the community
- Never did and never will want to be Chief

3) Why don't you want to be Chief? (Check all that apply)

- Not enough pay

- More security and benefits in union membership
- Change of work schedule
- I do not like dealing with the political aspects of the position
- I do want to be Chief one day

4) Why didn't you want to be Chief at the last promotional opportunity?

(Check all that apply)

- Did not like who would have been my boss, the safety director
- Did not like the political aspects of the position
- Did not fit the qualifications
- I did want to, I just did not follow through

3) Are there problems with job performance levels of eligible officers who don't wish to be promoted to the next rank?

1) Is it abnormal if no RFD members want to be Chief?

- Yes, there must be a problem
- No, it just depends on the individual

- Maybe

2) If you want to be Chief, should you try harder to do your best at your current position?

- No, just place high enough on the test and then do the job of being a leader when you get there.
- Doesn't matter
- Yes, you should do your best at every position

3) Are you doing the best job you can at your current position?

- I could do better if I had a good reason
- I don't need to do my best, I'm doing a good job
- Yes, I try to do my job as best I can
- Yes but others aren't doing the best they can

4) Do you think the officers of this department are performing adequately?

- No, they don't try very hard
- Yes, they are doing the best they can with what they have
- Some are and some are not
- They have no ambition and it shows

OHIO REVISED CODE sec. 124.34 appeal process section

“ORC 124.34 (C) In the case of the suspension for any period of time, or a fine, demotion, or removal, of a chief of police , a chief of a fire department, or any member of the police or fire department of a city or civil service township, who is in the classified civil service,

the appointing authority shall furnish the chief or member with a copy of the order of suspension, fine, demotion, or removal, which order shall state the reasons for the action. The order shall be filed with the municipal or civil service township civil service commission. Within ten days following the filing of the order, the chief or member may file an appeal, in writing, with the commission. If an appeal is filed, the commission shall forthwith notify the appointing authority and shall hear, or appoint a trial board to hear, the appeal within thirty days from and after its filing with the commission, and it may affirm, disaffirm, or modify the judgment of the appointing authority. An appeal on questions of law and fact may be had from the decision of the commission to the court of common pleas in the county in which the city or civil service township is situated. The appeal shall be taken within thirty days from the finding of the commission.”

CITY OF RAVENNA MUNICIPLE CODIFIED ORDINANCE FOR FLEX TIME

“Ravenna Codified Ordinance 260.10

The following employees shall be considered salaried employees:

The Chief of the Fire Department

Salaried employees shall be ineligible for overtime pay and compensatory time, but are eligible for flexible time as set forth in Section 260.20

Ravenna Codified Ordinance 260.20 FLEXIBLE TIME.

Flexible time allows an employee to take time off during a regular shift in an amount equal the excess hours worked on a previous shift as a result of either an emergency or extraordinary circumstance.

Flexible time must be approved by the employee's appointing authority.

Flexible time must be taken within thirty calendar days following the time earned. An extension of an additional thirty days may be granted by the appointing authority for extraordinary circumstances.

LOCAL 1340 ARTICLE 17 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

17.01 PURPOSE: Every employee shall have the right to present his grievance in accordance with the procedures provided herein, free from any interference, coercion, restraint, discrimination, or reprisal and, shall have the right to be represented by a Union representative at all stages of the grievance procedure. It is the intent and purpose of the parties to this Agreement that all grievances shall be settled, if possible, at the lowest step of this procedure. The Union agrees to indemnify and hold the Employer harmless against any and all claims, demands, lawsuits, or other form of liability that may arise out of any determination that the Union failed to fairly represent a member of the bargaining unit during the exercise of his rights as provided by this grievance procedure.

PROCEDURE: The following procedures shall apply to the administration of all grievances

filed under this procedure:

- a) All grievances shall include: the name and position of the aggrieved party; the identity of the provisions of this Agreement involved in the grievance; the time and place where the alleged events or conditions constituting the grievance took place; the identity of the party responsible for causing the said grievance, if known to the aggrieved party; and a general statement of the nature of the grievance and the redress sought by the aggrieved party.
- b) All decisions shall be rendered in writing at each step of the grievance procedure. Each decision shall be transmitted to the aggrieved party and his representative, if any.

grievance affects a department-wide controversy it may be submitted at Step 3.

preparation and processing of grievances may be conducted during personal down time and/or non-dedicated working hours during the course of a regular "tour of duty" as long as this will not cause an interruption of the expected duties of the bargaining unit member(s).

- e) Nothing contained herein shall be construed as limiting the right of any employee having a grievance to discuss the matter informally with any appropriate member of the administration and having said matter informally adjusted without the intervention of the Union, provided that the adjustment is not inconsistent with the terms of this Agreement. In the event that any grievance is adjusted without formal determination, pursuant to this procedure, while such adjustment shall be binding upon the aggrieved party and shall, in all respect,

be final, said adjustments shall not create a precedent or ruling binding upon the Employer in future proceedings.

- f) The time limits provided herein will be strictly adhered to and any grievance not filed initially or appealed within the specified time limits will be deemed waived and void. If the Employer fails to reply within the specified time limits, the grievance shall automatically move to the next step. The time limits specified for either party may be extended only by written mutual agreement.
- g) This procedure shall not be used for the purpose of adding to, subtracting from, or altering in any way, any of the provisions of this Agreement.
- h) If the Chief is not available, the grievance may be presented to Step 3.

TEPS: All grievances shall be administered in accordance with the following steps of the grievance procedure:

STEP 1: An employee who believes he may have a grievance shall notify his immediate supervisor, in writing, of the possible grievance within five (5) days of the knowledge of the occurrence with the facts giving rise to the grievance. The supervisor will schedule an informal meeting with the employee and his representative if the representative's presence is requested by the employee within five (5) days of the date of the notice by the employee. The supervisor and the employee, along with the employee's Steward, if his presence is requested by the employee, will discuss the issue in dispute with the objective of resolving the matter informally. If the employee's supervisor is the Chief, the grievance shall commence at Step 2, subject to the time limits for initially filing a

grievance in this step.

STEP 2: If the dispute is not resolved informally at Step 1, it shall be reduced to writing by the grievant and presented as a grievance to the Chief of the Fire Department within five (5) days of the informal meeting or notification of the supervisor's decision at Step 1 whichever is later, but not later than seven (7) days from the date of the meeting if the supervisor fails to give the employee an answer. The Chief shall give his answer within five (5) days of the meeting.

STEP 3: If the aggrieved party is not satisfied with the written decision at the conclusion of Step 2, a written appeal of the decision may be filed with the Mayor/Safety Director within five (5) days from the date of the rendering of the decision in Step 2. Copies of the written decision shall be submitted with the appeal. The Mayor/Safety Director or his designee shall convene a hearing within ten (10) days of the receipt of the appeal. The hearing will be held with the aggrieved party, his representative and any other party necessary to provide the required information for the rendering of a proper decision. The Mayor/Safety Director or his designee shall issue a written decision to the employee's representative, with a copy to the employee if the employee requests, within ten (10) days from the date of the hearing.

ARTICLE 18 ARBITRATION PROCEDURE

18.01 In the event a grievance is unresolved after being processed through all of the steps of the grievance procedure, unless mutually waived or having passed through the various steps

by timely default of the Employer, then within ten (10) days after the rendering of the decision at Step 3 or a timely default by the Employer at Step 3, the aggrieved party may submit the grievance to arbitration. Within this ten (10) days period, the parties will meet to attempt to mutually agree upon an arbitrator selected from the permanent panel created by this procedure. If **an** agreement cannot be reached, then the panel members' names will be stricken alternately until one (1) name remains who shall be designated the arbitrator to hear the grievance in question. The parties may mutually agree to select an arbitrator not on the list of permanent arbitrators.

18.02 The arbitrator shall have no power or authority to add to, subtract from, or in any manner, alter the specific terms of this Agreement or to make any award requiring the commission of any act prohibited by law, or to make any award that itself is contrary to law or violates any of the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

18.03 The arbitrator shall not decide more than one (1) grievance on the same hearing date or series of hearing days except by mutual written agreement of the parties.

18.04 The hearing or hearings shall be conducted pursuant to the rules of Voluntary Arbitration of the American Arbitration Association.

18.05 The fees and expenses of the arbitrator and the cost of the hearing room, if any, will be borne by the party losing the grievance. All other expenses shall be borne by the party incurring them. Neither party shall be responsible for any of the expense incurred by the other party.

18.06 The arbitrator's decision and award will be in writing and delivered within thirty (30)

days from the date the record is closed. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding upon the parties

18.07 There is hereby created a permanent panel of arbitrators to be used for the selection of arbitrators pursuant to this Arbitration Procedure. Those individuals placed on this panel, subject to their agreement to serve, shall be: 1) Dr. Nels Nelson; 2) Dr. Harry Graham; 3) Rob G. Stein; 4) Susan Ruben Grady; 5) Margaret Nancy Johnson. In the event none of the named arbitrators are available, the parties agree to select an arbitrator from a list requested from the American Arbitration Association.

18.08 The Union agrees to indemnify and hold the Employer harmless against any and all claims, demands, suits or other forms of liabilities that may arise out of any determination that the Union failed to fairly represent a member of the bargaining unit during the exercise of his rights as provided by the Grievance and Arbitration procedures contained herein.” (IAFF Local 1340 2008 Contract)

IAFF Local 1340 2008-2009 Contract Section 30.02 EDUCATION-COLLEGE LEVEL:

This section is for those employees wishing to further their education through college level related courses. For those classes and courses that employees desire to take, upon the prior approval of the Fire Chief, the Employer shall pay one-half (1/2) of the books and tuition upon earning a grade of "B" or better on completion of the course(s) for each quarter or semester. The Employer shall reimburse the employee for mileage and meals according to the rates established by City Council. The course(s) must be related to the duties performed by the employee. Request to attend such classes and course(s) shall be within the budget constraints of the Department but shall not be unreasonably denied by the Chief.

The reimbursement for education shall be subjected to the following conditions:

- a) Request for attendance must be in writing to the Chief no later than thirty (30) days prior to the start of class.
- b) Upon successful completion of the class (attaining a "B" or better), the employee shall present to the Employer the employee's tuition statement and the course grade for tuition reimbursement.
- c) To be eligible to attend, the employee must be formally accepted by the university **or college** and meet its requirements and must have completed two (2) full years of service with the Ravenna Fire Department.
- d) Class attendance shall be on the employee's time and the Employer shall not pay the employee for any time spent in class attendance.
- e) The Employer shall complete the reimbursement to the employee within thirty (30) days of the employee's presentation of satisfactory documentation