

Osseo - Maple Grove Press

Will you answer the call?; Maple Grove Fire Department in need of daytime firefighters

by Wendy Erlien – August 15, 2007

At the end of June, each fire station within Maple Grove hosted a recruitment open house to provide members of the community with an opportunity to ask questions about becoming a volunteer firefighter. The department recently put the call out looking for people interested in becoming part-time/paid-on-call firefighters that can respond to fire calls during the day.

As with many volunteer fire departments, recruiting and retaining firefighters can be a challenge.

The Maple Grove Fire Department has recently put the call out to the community, looking for people interested in becoming part-time/paid-on-call firefighters that can respond to fire calls during the day.

"We want to create a community call to service," said Maple Grove assistant fire Chief Rob Pearson. "We wanted to create excitement, provide information and to let people know we need help. Many communities need help and work with continuing recruitment, especially during the daytime hours."

Pearson indicated that the majority of fire calls within Maple Grove are during the week and during the day. Two thirds of the calls during the week are from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and less than one third of the staff is available.

"Many communities are losing firefighters as they move elsewhere," he said. "Some of the problems are not only recruitment, but retention. We are trying to find out who is home during the day in Maple Grove, willing to go through the lengthy training and willing to answer the call for help."

Pearson stated that city of Maple Grove currently has five stations. Per city ordinance, the city is budgeted for 20 firefighters throughout the city.

"We want to try hard to maintain the volunteer fire department," he said. "As taxpayers, it is significantly less if we have a volunteer type of fire department than if we hire a full-time staff. At one point, being part of a volunteer fire department used to be part of a culture. Now, it also turned into a job."

As a minimum, the Maple Grove Fire Department trains all personnel as First Responders (40 hours medical), Fire Fighter 1 and Hazardous Materials Operations at Hennepin VocTech. Additional course are offered through the VocTech for those who want to extend their training. All pre-approved training is provided at the fire department's expense. A high level of proficiency is maintained through drills that are conducted twice a month.

In addition to training, firefighters receive monetary compensation for time spent on fire calls, drills and required training as well as a pension. Firefighters are required to attend 45% of the fire calls dispatched to their respective stations when not at their regular job and to attend 66% of the monthly "in-house" training drills provided by the fire department.

"We want people that can learn a variety of functions. We put a lot of responsibility on people and on the training. We want people to be able to take care of others and themselves," said Pearson. "We want sound people that have sound problem solving, critical thinking skills. Not thrill seekers. We look for confident leaders that can take command from others. "

He indicated that when looking for the right people for the department, there are additional factors that are also taken into consideration such as availability, location in the city as well as physical abilities and other assessed items.

In an effort to reach out to those that are available during the daytime hours, the department hosted a

series of recruitment open houses in June to provide information to those people that were interested in becoming part-time/paid on-call daytime firefighters. Pearson hopes that they will be able to continue to provide recruitment information during other community events, such as the pumpkin open house and parades.

"We have a need and with the need, here is the opportunity," he said.

For more information on joining the Maple Grove Fire Department or to receive an application, call 763-494-6300 during business hours.